Documentary Photography

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Documentary Photography

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Introduction

The term documentary photography came into use during the depression years, when telling pictures of poverty-stricken farmers awakened Americans to the need for social reform. And in many minds this field of photography still suggests pictures of the Dust Bowl, of rural hardship and urban slums.

Yet as this book shows, there is, and always has been, far more to documentary photography than the recording of the world's ills. For there is much more to document than suffering and poverty: faraway places and exotic peoples, quirks of nature and of society, the whole gamut of emotions and relationships. The subject matter is, indeed, almost unlimited.

Then is every photograph a documentary? Not really, for it must convey a message that sets it apart from a landscape, a portrait, a street scene. It may record an event, but the event must have some general significance, more than the specific significance of a news photo. It may record character or emotion—but again, of some general social significance; it is more than personally revelatory, as a portrait is.

Yet whether it shows us family life in Paris or in Maine, the central square of Peking or a stretch of U.S. Route 66, a dive in New York's slums or a village café in Hungary, a sharecropper's cabin or a suburban living room, the documentary photograph tells us something important about our world—and in the best examples, makes us think about the world in a new way.

The Editors

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To See, to Record—and to Comment

Documentary photography: a depiction of the real world by a photographer whose intent is to communicate something of importance—to make a comment—that will be understood by the viewer.

That is the definition on which this book is based. It is arbitrary by necessity, since there is no universally accepted definition that suits all aspects of this important and intriguing category. A documentary photograph may be as public as a picture in a mass-circulation magazine, or as private as an intimate view of a loved one. On cursory inspection a good documentary photograph may seem little more than a snapshot. But under more careful scrutiny it generally reveals itself to be a visual representation of a deeply felt moment, as rich in psychological and emotional meaning as a personal experience vividly recalled.

That the attributes of a documentary photograph seem contradictory may be a result of the newness of the term. It was not even coined until the 1930s and then it was linked in the public mind with documentary films—movies that, without fictionalized plot, usually examined the lives of little-known people in remote places. These films, unlike the routine travelogue, were a visual commentary on the world. The same kind of communication had long been provided by still photographs, but until that point they had never been dignified by categorization as something special.

The photographs made by the pioneers of documentary photography look quite different from those being created by many of its modern practitioners. Yet they are fundamentally the same—all comment on reality—and the apparent differences developed logically as the form progressed from the simple to the complex. Documentary photography evolved in several stages, each of which has its own characteristics. The first stage was broad-based and was directly related to the invention of photography itself. With the introduction of the daguerreotype in 1839 came the first relatively simple and inexpensive way to perpetuate images, to fulfill the common desire for a permanent record of the appearance of family, friends and familiar scenes. Record-making became still easier in 1888, when George Eastman brought out his roll-film Kodak: what had been comparatively simple now became so routine that anyone could—and almost everyone did—take personal pictures; the album pasted full of snapshots became a source of family unity and pride. In the broadest sense, these record pictures were documentary photographs: they were scenes from the real world of a subject important to the photographer. And if the photographer was a prodigy like Lartigue, who made photographs of his family, friends and relations before World War I *(pages 28-35)*, the results were lighthearted, sophisticated art.

If the familiar made a cherished photographic record, so did the unfamil-

iar. The early photographers rushed off to capture views of distant, exotic places that could be visited only by the well-to-do and adventurous. Pictures of such romantic sites as Niagara Falls, the Egyptian pyramids and the Alps were purchased to frame and hang on parlor walls; no late-19th Century home was complete without a scene from a faraway place on display. In the 1850s the popularity of the stereoscope, a device in which pictures could be seen in three dimensions, expanded the already booming market for pictures of scenic places. But even without an optical gimmick like the stereoscope, photographs brought the world into the home.

These scenic views won such wide popularity partly because they emphasized a quality, essential to the documentary photograph, that is a basic characteristic of the camera-made image: it provides a clear representation of what the retina of the human eye sees but does not always notice. In the beginning this quality alone seemed miraculous, and the camera was used mainly as a copier of nature. The results were regarded as evidence—as documents—of nature as it exists. Faith in the camera as a literal recorder gave rise to a belief that persists to this day—that the camera does not lie. This trust of the camera provides documentary photography with its greatest psychological strength and its strongest selling point—it tells the truth.

As the camera gained acceptance as a reliable visual reporter, its potential became apparent to photographers who had something more to say than could be communicated by a mere snapshot. A picture of the Alps, if made with sensitivity and skill, could be more than a literal record of a majestic scene. The photograph conveyed ideas beyond the two-dimensional, black-and-gray image of shadows and light. The scene before the lens was reality, but the photographer could make his camera's rendering of the scene generate another reality, deeper and perhaps more important—he could introduce comment. If the first attribute of the documentary photograph was its ability to convey the truth about the real world, its second was its ability to communicate the photographer's comment on that truth.

The first master of this technique was Eugène Atget. He referred to himself simply as a maker of documents—clear, uncluttered views of his beloved turn-of-the-century Paris—which he sold occasionally as reference material for artists and architects. Yet he was a genius at understanding the uses of the camera, particularly its ability to convey his own view. Shots of empty parks *(pages 36-42),* when made by Atget, blended the reality of the scene with its deeper meaning as a part of a city, and with his own feeling for the city. The results are masterworks of documentary photography.

The realization that the camera could communicate truth while commenting upon it led to the second stage in the expanding history of documentary photography: the discovery of the camera's power to hold up a mirror to so-

ciety, to let the world see its reflection. Jacob Riis, a Danish-born newspaper reporter of the late 19th Century, was one of the first to show how photographs could become social documents. Riis picked up his camera in desperation. He wanted Americans to see for themselves what he had been writing about—the grinding brutality of life in New York City's slums. His pictures were as trenchant as his reporting, exposing to the world the gray, lined face of American poverty. Following soon after Riis came one of the best social documentarians in the history of photography, Lewis W. Hine. Hine was a trained sociologist and schoolteacher whose passionate social awareness took him into factories and down into mines to photograph the inhuman conditions imposed on working-class children and immigrant laborers. His pictures were down-to-earth indictments of early-20th Century American industrial practices, but his talent and compassion made his work do more than arouse indignation; it made the viewer embrace the subjects as fellow human beings and share their hardships. Together, Riis and Hine turned documentary photography to a study of the human condition. This visual comment on the joys and pains of society has to a great extent occupied practitioners in this field ever since.

Through the Depression of the 1930s, the war years of the 1940s and into the postwar recovery period, documentary photographers roamed the world—and examined their own neighborhoods—to capture the special feel of time and place created by each society at a given moment in history. Although these photographers, who included such giants as W. Eugene Smith, André Kertész, Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans, viewed human suffering and despair everywhere they wandered, they also captured the inner strength, dignity and transcendent hope of their subjects. They believed that man was redeemable. Perhaps more important, they felt man was worthy of redemption. Like the Romantic novelists of the 19th Century, these documentary photographers thought that by showing man his follies, they would lead him to correct them. The brooding genius Smith was convinced that once his pictures laid bare the futility, savagery and brute stupidity of war, mankind would be horrified into abolishing warfare for all time.

By the 1950s, however, it was clear that the documentary photographers had achieved no more in reforming society than had the Romantic novelists. Some consciences had been stirred, some laws had even been enacted—Hine's pictures led to the passage of labor legislation that rescued children from servitude in factories. But mankind had not been elevated to a state of greater purity through photographs, and many disillusioned documentarians turned to another approach.

The development of a new concept of documentary photography was signaled by a single event, the publication in 1958 of Robert Frank's book, *The*

Americans. A collection of photographs that Frank made during a tour of the United States, it presented views of the country by an outsider—Frank was born and raised in Switzerland. In his pictures, he saw the patch in the fabric of the American flag *(page 174)*. He set down the tedium of daily life, the polluting residue of industrial society, the frustrations of those Americans caught between the promise of the national rhetoric and its everyday reality. Frank's view was hard-nosed, direct and very personal.

After *The Americans* documentary photography entered the contemporary phase of its evolution. Many photographers turned inward as they withdrew from the rough-and-tumble of public life and actions. Their concern became the recognition—and the problems—of the inner man. Communicating psychological reality became more important than conveying visual reality or social reality. The photographer's emotions, or his experience, became as pivotal to the picture as his view of the world. This charting of the psyche is complex, often treacherous, photography, for it leads to pictures that at first glance may look more like rejects—blurred, strangely framed, empty—than like successful works of art. They demand close interpretation; the viewer must think about them to get the photographer's message.

In its newest form documentary photography is, oddly, returning to its beginnings for subject matter. These modern photographs, like daguerreotypes of old, often show families, friends and homes. But the resemblance to the old family snapshot is only superficial. For within these familiar images today's photographers have found a new reality to record and comment on: their pictures communicate the emotions and interpersonal relationships of private life. From the 19th Century album of snapshots to the 20th Century portfolio of intimate views, documentary photography continues its spiral toward the understanding of society and man. □

John Thomson: Guide to Far-off Places

In the mid-19th Century, England enjoyed a heady new craze—travel and exploration. The Orient and Africa were opened at last to the Western world, and the public devoured the descriptions each traveler felt compelled to write. The flood of books could not satisfy the general curiosity. It took photographs to make the unbelievable real.

Among the first of the photographer-explorers was a practical Scotsman, John Thomson. In 1862 he took his cameras to the Far East, and there for about 10 years, five of them in China, snapped cities and landscapes. Thomson's purpose was clearly documentary; the photograph, he wrote in his introduction to *Illustrations of China and Its People,* "affords the nearest approach that can be made toward placing the reader actually before the scene which is represented."

The book, published in four volumes between 1873 and 1874, was illustrated with 200 of his photographs. In them the enthusiastic public now saw just what Thomson saw: every building stone, every human posture, every detail of clothing. They were so brimming with information that the viewer felt transported to China. Thomson made the photograph serve as the viewer's vicarious experience.

Didactic Victorians took these photographs very seriously—and no one thought of them as "art," least of all Thomson himself. His purpose was simply to instruct. But in documenting the previously undocumented, Thomson did produce a body of work with, to quote Beaumont Newhall, "that sense of the immediacy and authenticity of documentation, which a photograph can impart so forcibly."

Avenue to the Ming Tombs, c. 1865

Camels sculptured from white limestone flank the Way of the Spirit leading to the tombs of the Ming Dynasty emperors 30 miles north of Peking. Two elephants can be seen in the distance. The greater-than-life-sized statues, thought to be guarantors of good fortune, date from the 15th Century. The receding statuary emphasizes the vastness of the sacred valley, and the standing man, dwarfed by the statue, seems no more alive than the animals in this forbidding necropolis.

Night Watchman, Peking, c. 1865

Old Wang, a Manchu guard, beats his wooden clapper to frighten away thieves. The government allotted him the sheepskin coat for protection on winter nights. Ragged and hollow-cheeked, this functionary provided a shocking glimpse of a China long hidden from Western eyes.

View of the Central Street, Chinese Quarter, c. 1865

Thomson climbed to the top of the city wall for this panorama of the central roadway of old Peking. His picture is so clear, and so crammed with information, that the eye can travel endlessly through this strange and wonderful toy town, and at every viewing discover a new detail. In the right rear, beyond the wide, low bridge, tent shops cluster beneath the giant memorial arch; in the foreground, a laborer with buckets suspended from a yoke is about to repair the cobbled road; and far off on the horizon the three rising tiers of the Temple of Heaven are just barely visible.

Thomson found a staggering variety of races and classes in the Orient, and his photographs revealed each sitter to be a member of a unique group; he meticulously recorded costumes or trade implements and posed tableaux to suggest craft or caste. On this page, two Javanese aristocrats at upper left pridefully display their intricate garments, a Hindu barber above sets to work on a client, and a Manchu matron at left models her coiffure, fore and aft. Such detail delighted Thomson, who recommended "careful study of the illustrations" to his "fair readers." The six studio pictures at right were all taken in Singapore, even then (the 1860s) a melting pot; he made no record of who the subjects were.

Benjamin Stone: Chronicler of a Fading Era

To the Duke's Health, 1899

Dressed in their Sunday best, neighbors of the Duke of Buccleuch drink his health in rum and milk. By centuries-old custom they paid him a small annual road toll called Wroth Silver, and he provided them a lavish breakfast at the Dun Cow. The arrangement was agreeable to everybody.

Two solemn young people stand framed by a portal of Westminster Abbey after taking part in the Holy Thursday ceremony at which alms are given to the poor. The observance commemorates the day when Christ washed the feet of His disciples; the white scarves represent the towel He used to dry them. The glow radiating from the scarves may have resulted from halation, the reflection and scattering of light from the back of the glass plate; but the photographer clearly valued its air of supernatural significance. ►

Sir Benjamin Stone's passion for the photographic record was at least equal to that of his fellows, but he found the close-at-hand world of Victorian and Edwardian England more intriguing than the faraway places that fascinated such predecessors as John Thomson.

Stone was greatly interested in the survival into his day of ancient customs and ceremonies, and he began taking pictures simply because he could not buy the sort he wanted.

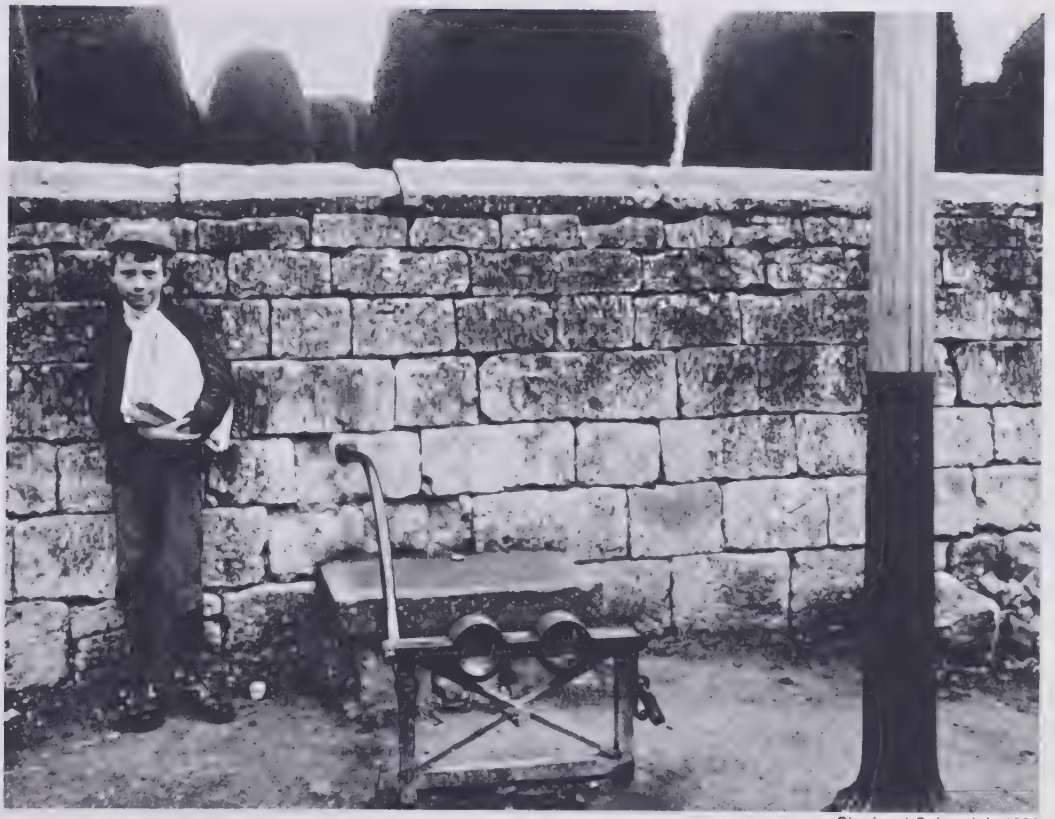
"Photographs are the most reliable, the most correct recording means, and therefore they become the most important aid in educating and obtaining instruction," he wrote. And for some 40 years, applying the enormous single-mindedness and the energy that were so eminently Victorian, he catalogued British life, as a contemporary wrote, "to portray for the benefit of future generations the manners and customs, the festivals and pageants, the historic buildings and places of our time."

His dedication to this goal was astonishing. How many photographs he took no one now knows, but more than 25,000 prints survive, all in near-perfect condition. This great body of work was produced in his spare time—Sir Benjamin was also a successful glass manufacturer, a tireless civic leader and a Member of Parliament. Happily, he was wealthy; the £30,000 he spent on photography would be equivalent today to about $750,000.

Famous as a photographer in his own day, Stone has been almost forgotten in ours. Nevertheless the intense honesty of his work as well as its immense value as the chronicle of an age earn him an important niche in the history of documentary photography.

Maundy Thursday Ceremony, 1898

Painswick Churchyard, Gloucestershire, 1902



Stocks at Painswick, 1902

◄ *Painswick churchyard is a burial ground, yet in this picture it looks anything but morbid. In the rows of plump, meticulously clipped yew trees —symbols of immortality—and in the tidy pathways, so obviously meant for casual strolling, the photographer found an orderly scene to document, yet one full of airiness and grace.*

Outside the same churchyard a young news vendor stands warily beside a set of leg stocks. Confinement to the stocks, once a common form of humiliating punishment for minor offenses, was not imposed after the 1860s, but this set remained as a local relic—perhaps as a warning to the overly high-spirited. And the cautionary effect is heightened by the composition of the picture, its severe horizontal and vertical lines softened only by the billowing yew-tops above.

Charcoal Burner of Worcestershire, 1896

Self-conscious, and perhaps a bit suspicious of Sir Benjamin's motive in photographing a humble workman, a charcoal burner poses with his ax and hand-hewn pyre. To proper Victorians, though, the hearty old man might have illustrated the maxim, "the labourer is worthy of his hire."

One moment of an outing down a Cornish lane will exist as long as this photograph survives. The enormous amount of information in the picture —from the carriage and its occupants, dwarfed by the trees, to the wealth of detail in the branches and leaves—adds up to a re-creation of reality. ►

Lane near Penzance, Cornwall, 1893

Jacques-Henri Lartigue: One Boy's Family

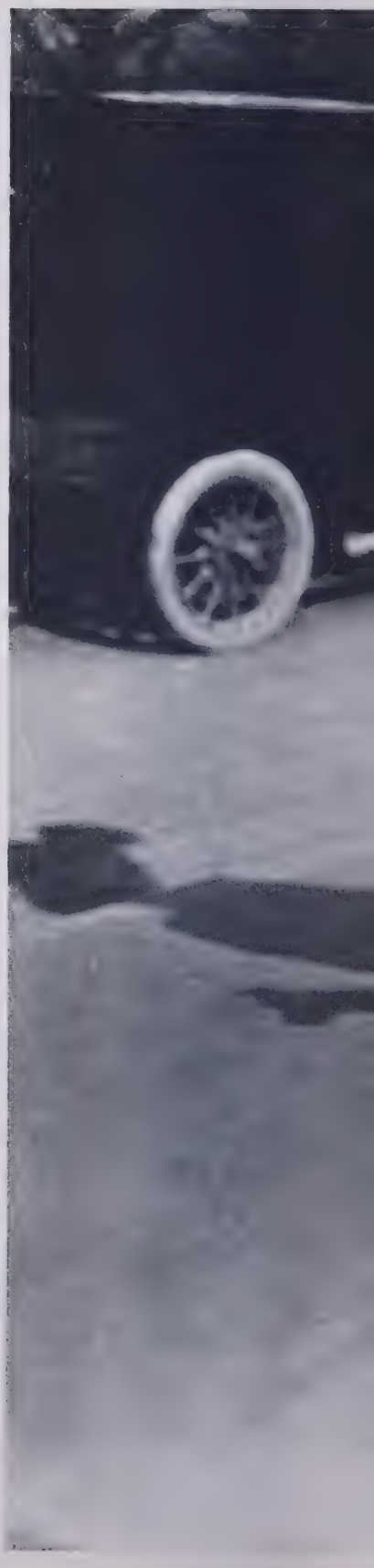
By the beginning of the 20th Century, photography had become everyman's toy. The rich and the poor, the esthetically gifted and the insensitive duffers, all used the camera to create visual records of their family histories. But it remained for a seven-year-old boy in France, Jacques-Henri Lartigue, to make the family photo album a work of documentary art.

"My motivation regarding photography is still today, seventy years later, the same: a deep love for a certain period of my life and a desire to freeze its beautiful moments," Lartigue declared when he was nearly eighty. "Photography to me is catching a moment which is passing, and which is true."

Before the young photographer ever owned a camera, he had tried to "be" one himself: by blinking rapidly three times he thought he could fix a scene firmly in his mind. When he found that the pictures were never there when he wanted them, the little boy became so depressed that his parents had to call a doctor. No remedy was found. Then Papa Lartigue, by a stroke of brilliant intuition, bought the boy a camera. A rapid cure was followed by fierce photographic mania.

That Lartigue's life thereafter, as a child and young man, was a turn-of-the-century idyll, untroubled either emotionally or economically, is our luck as well as his. For his pictures of his family and the greater world around him have such spontaneity, such humorous unposed freshness, such generosity of spirit, that we enjoy sharing his private moments. It is his genius that the record of the zany, sports-crazed Lartigue family becomes the family album everyone might long for.

A sumptuously befurred promeneuse, preceded by her brace of fox terriers, sharply eyes the young photographer snapping her from a park bench. Although he clearly admires the elegant lady, his mischievous boy's vision captures something about her that is—just faintly—comic.



Afternoon Walk, Bois de Boulogne, 1911

Zissou at the Airfield, 1911

◄ *Older brother Maurice, known as Zissou, seems to defy gravity; actually, he is leaning into the wash of air created by a whirling propeller at Buc airfield. "In order to resist the wind of the propeller he had to bend forward," says Lartigue. Zissou's stolid look, dandified outfit and cane accentuate the picture's Chaplinesque air.*

Seventeen-year-old cousin Simone, abandoning dignity, rehearses in the park at St.-Cloud for a starring role as acrobat in a circus movie. The film was never made, but the still indicates it would have been lively. Simone was a close friend of Jacques's from childhood and, like all his madcap family, thoroughly used to his camera.

Simone in the Park, 1913

Falling Glider at Combegrasse, Auvergne, 1922

Lartigue and his brother Zissou were passionate about airplanes; from early boyhood they cut classes to hang around airfields and they experimented with homemade gliders themselves. In 1922 they journeyed to Auvergne to see the tests of a new glider. Alas, the craft failed to gain altitude and fell almost at once, its launching cables still flapping. Lartigue snapped just as the wing dipped; failure was so rapid the onlookers are just beginning to react to the accident.

Mother's Friends at Pourville, 1906

Corseted ladies in summer dresses promenade above the Norman resort of Pourville-sur-Mer, no doubt to admire the view of beach, pleasure boats and country houses. Their hats are firmly anchored, but the breeze whips at one lady's veil as another pauses to observe the town below.

The gray, muted quality of this photograph is an abrupt contrast to the gaiety of Lartigue's earlier pictures, an indication of war's effect on the carefree life he recorded so lovingly. The faceless men are not individuals, but soldiers of the French Republic. The airplane, once the object of much excitement, has now become a threat; and as though to emphasize its power, the one in this scene is the only element that is in focus. ►

Poilus and a Biplane, 1914

Eugène Atget: A Romance with Paris

Iron Gate and Lamppost at St.-Cloud, date unknown

At about the same time that Lartigue began chronicling his happy family's life, Eugène Atget set out on a more serious mission of his own. He intended, a friend later explained, "to create a collection of all that which both in Paris and its surroundings was artistic and picturesque." He began the task in 1898 and kept at it the rest of his life, for 29 years lugging his old-fashioned, heavy view camera all over the city. He documented historic buildings, all-but-hidden architectural details, glimpses of side alleys and ordinary street life —bits and fragments that eventually would fit into the great mosaic he planned as a monumental record of the Paris he knew and loved.

A former sailor and small-time actor, Atget was 41 when he began his new career. His pictures won him no fame in his own lonely lifetime. But his photographs of the lovely parks that surround and embellish Paris are a special part of the work that has become famous since he died. Almost all of them were taken by dawn's early light, when no one else was around. They are documents, clear and uncontrived, of the city's quiet side. That they are also works of art is a tribute to a photographic vision that transcended strict record-making to preserve forever the spirit of a city as well as its appearance.

Like an overgrown fern frond, a lampless light standard rises gracefully from an ironwork gate, one of many such dividers, beautiful as well as utilitarian, that demonstrate the concern for the esthetic that endeared Paris to Atget.

The imposing Tapis Vert (Green Carpet) sweeps ► west for 360 yards from the Fountain of Latona. The picture shows a tree and vase prominently in the left foreground; in juxtaposition to the immense but faraway avenue, they emphasize the grandeur of this vista at Versailles.

Tapis Vert from the Fountain of Latona at Versailles, 1901

The Park at St.-Cloud, date unknown

The Park at Sceaux, date unknown

◄ *Just across the Seine from Paris' busiest gate lies the 970-acre park of St.-Cloud (left). Its manicured trees and precisely laid-out walks and fountains, contrasting with the rambling vegetation of Sceaux (above), were more typical of a city where human artistry could be seen on every hand.*

The carefully cared-for estate of Sceaux, confiscated from the Duke of Penthièvre during the French Revolution, had reverted almost to woodland at the time Atget photographed it. The place was soon to be restored as a public garden and before it disappeared forever, the photographer captured a small bit of the wilderness that lent a piquant touch to the sophisticated Paris he loved.

The Hundred Steps at Versailles, date unknown

Ornamental Urn at Versailles, date unknown

Curving lilies and a leaf emerge from a stone urn on one Versailles path in this record of the masterly design and craftsmanship of the Sun King's palace. And the picture, by focusing so sharply on a detail, provides one small clue to why Paris became the center of the elegant world.

◄ *The Hundred Steps at Versailles rise to a walk offering a vista of the palace gardens. They became a setting for the enjoyment of Louis XIV and his court; the picture shows the scene from the vantage point of a dwarfed and dazzled subject.*

Light weaves among the receding columns of plane trees and statues, and in the foreground shadow dapples the ground and the stone figure. The angle of view on the trees forming an arc around the statuary emphasizes how at Versailles even nature was used to serve the kingly design.

Alley of Plane Trees at Versailles, date unknown

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LEWIS HINE: *Child with Doll*, Paris, 1918

Rallying the Conscience of Society

Once the camera had proved itself a device for showing things as they were, it was inevitably thought of as a tool for changing things to the way they ought to be. Among the first to sense the persuasive power of photography was John Thomson, who turned his camera from exotic China *(pages 16-21)* to the equally exotic—at least to his genteel readers—slums of London *(right).* Thomson's photographs of lower-class life were sympathetic but, like his Chinese pictures, mainly educational in purpose; they acquainted the public with evils of the slums without urging specific remedial action. It remained for an American to show how the documentary photograph could become an effective weapon in a campaign for reform. He was Jacob Riis, young Danish-born reporter for the New York *Tribune* and later for the *Evening Sun.* And his target, again, was city slums.

Wearing the apron of his trade, the keeper of a London hostel in Drury Lane, where ex-convicts just released from prison could get lodgings or a ha'penny pudding on credit, talks to a customer. The photograph, taken by John Thomson about 1877, appeared in the book titled Street Life in London, a landmark in pictorial persuasion.

In the late 1880s, when New York's immigrant-jammed slums were Riis's beat, they included the most densely crowded urban areas in the world. More than a million people lived in their tenements, and one ward on the Lower East Side had a population density of 334,000 persons per square mile. The death rate was high: nearly 25,000 tenement dwellers died in a single year, and 80,000 were said to be sick at any given moment. The crime rate was equally shocking: in one tenement 102 of the 478 tenants were arrested in a single four-year period.

As a crusading reporter Riis wrote exposé articles in his paper and complained personally to city health officials—with scant results. But he was as resourceful as he was committed, and he no sooner learned that newly invented flashlight powder permitted photographs indoors than he took a camera inside overcrowded flats and filthy cafés.

The pictures that Riis made *(pages 49-55)* resulted in an article in *Scribner's Magazine* and a year later (1890) in a historic book, *How the Other Half Lives.* They had a shocking effect that is hard to imagine today, when pictures are all around; at that time photographs in print were new. Theodore Roosevelt, then a rising young politician, promptly called on Riis and left him a note saying, "I have read your book and I have come to help." When Roosevelt became New York Police Commissioner he did, cracking down on some of the worst abuses. Others joined in an effective reform movement that changed the face of a part of New York and cleaned up many slums. But the indirect results were equally important, for Riis had proved what crusading documentary photography could do.

Two decades later another cause gripped Americans, this time the issue of child labor. Almost two million youngsters between the ages of 10 and 15 were working for a living, and a reform-minded organization called the National Child Labor Committee engaged Lewis Hine, a photographer who had already made a name for himself with poignant photographs of immigrants

arriving at Ellis Island, to do for child labor what Riis had done for the slums. Hine did: by World War I, when he enlisted his camera in the aid of war relief, the tide running against child labor was irreversible.

But it was not until the '30s that the camera became so deeply involved in reform that the term documentary photography often connoted a picture with a social purpose. Photography's commitment to reform was a product of the times. Hard times they were in the United States, with as many as 15 million unemployed, numbers of them homeless and hungry. For the first time a national administration took on broad-scale responsibility for Americans' food and shelter—a step that was unpopular with many citizens, who held to traditional ideas of private incentive and, where necessary, local help for the needy. To win support for the unprecedented federal relief programs, the documentary camera went to Washington.

The United States employed photography in a number of federal agencies, but the one that outperformed them all was a small bureau of a section of the Department of Agriculture charged with dealing with the plight of the farmers, the Farm Security Administration *(pages 66-84).* Throughout its existence the FSA had hardly more than a dozen photographers all told, and never more than six at a time; yet that small band left a monumental collection of 270,000 photographs documenting the state of the nation at a crucial moment in its history.

The collection stands today in the Library of Congress as one of the finest pictorial records of American life extant, for the photographic bureau of the FSA went far beyond the objective for which it was conceived. The eloquent photographs did a far-reaching job of persuasion in their time; they hung on the walls of galleries, where they revealed to city people the problems their rural countrymen faced, and at county fairs, where they informed farmers about existing federal programs and showed how to qualify for aid. They illustrated dozens of books—including publications of a new kind in which text was incidental and the photographs stood on their own, aided only by slender captions. And in one two-year period pictures distributed on behalf of the FSA appeared in an estimated 175 magazines and newspapers having a total readership of many millions.

So commonplace had the documentary photograph become by then that it was a part of the public's everyday reading matter. The innovation that Riis had introduced was now established tradition, and in the years that followed, the photograph became an instrument of persuasion for every purpose —from winning presidential elections to fighting air pollution, from promoting integration to slowing down war. Today such photographs are so familiar their special character may escape notice, yet they never lose their power to convince or to stimulate action. □

Jacob Riis: Fighting the Slums

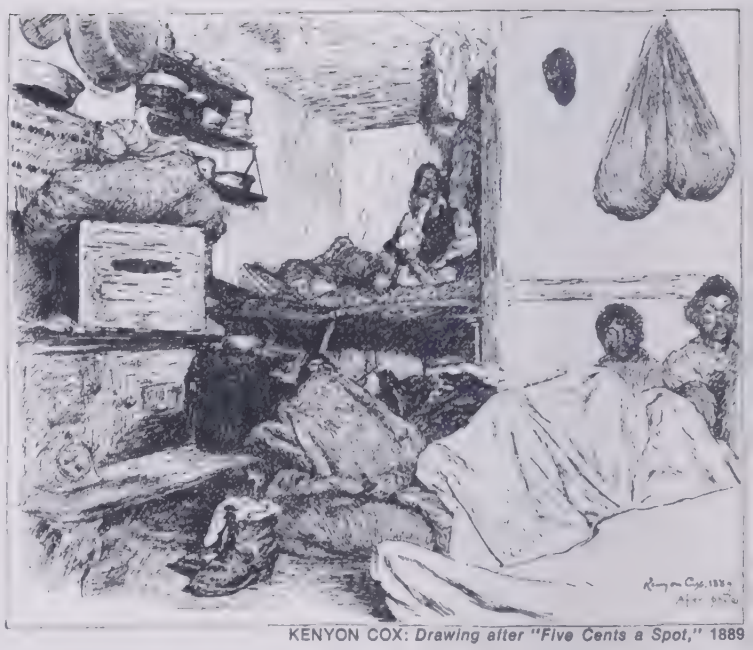
On Lincoln's Birthday in 1888, the New York *Sun* carried a chatty item that portended some serious news. "With their way illuminated by spasmodic flashes," the paper reported, "a mysterious party has been startling the town o'nights." The mysterious party consisted of Jacob Riis, two photographers and a health board official. The flashes came from ignited magnesium powder, which had just been found to give off sufficient light for taking photographs in dark places. And the dark places into which this was leading the little group were the slums of New York City.

New York's slums were among the worst in the world. Three quarters of the city's population lived in tenements; those in the Lower East Side's infamous 10th Ward—many of them recent immigrants—were packed together, 522 to the acre. The health board called it the typhus ward; the bureau of vital statistics called it the suicide ward. While the city had not actually given up on it, Riis felt the officials were doing little about it. He believed that the filth and overcrowding of the slums were the causes of their crime and disease, and that the afflictions could be cured only by eliminating the causes.

"The wish kept cropping up in me that there were some way of putting before the people what I saw there," he said. "I wrote, but it seemed to make no impression." He greeted the news of photography by flashpowder "with an outcry that startled my wife, sitting opposite. There it was, the thing I had been looking for all these years."

He lost no time in hiring photographers to assist him. But the late hours soon palled on the first two aides, and a third photographer proved unreliable. "There was at last but one way out of it, namely, for me to get a camera myself," Riis concluded. "So I became a photographer, after a fashion."

Photography was neither a pastime nor an art with Riis; "I had a use for it," he said, "and beyond that I never went." That was far enough. His writing, backed up with photographs, exerted an influence on the nation that is still being felt. New York's dreadful police lodging houses—where a "spot" could be had free, but whose filth and overcrowding were as awful as in the five-cent commercial flophouses *(right)* —were abolished. Lights were installed in hallways of tenements. One block, known as The Bend, was torn down and turned into a public park. Playgrounds were built for the schools, classrooms were opened after hours for children's club meetings, and clean water was supplied to the city. Riis helped accomplish all this by means of seven books, plus newspaper stories, magazine articles and lectures. In time he was called Emancipator of the Slums. But photographers remember him as the man who demonstrated the camera's power as a weapon for social reform and gave documentary photography a theme that has preoccupied it to this day.



KENYON COX: *Drawing after "Five Cents a Spot,"* 1889

When Jacob Riis shot the flophouse at right, the reproduction of photographs by photoengraving was in its infancy. To illustrate his article How the Other Half Lives, Scribner's Magazine, in 1889, had Riis's photographs transcribed into drawings that could be reproduced from wood blocks (above). But some of the reality of the squalor was lost. When Riis submitted his account of slum overcrowding to the city health board, he found that his arguments "did not make much of an impression"—until "my negatives, still dripping from the darkroom came to re-enforce them. From them there was no appeal." Thanks to his photographic persuasion, a park replaced the block on which this flophouse stood.

JACOB RIIS: *Five Cents a Spot*, New York, c. 1889

Baxter Street Court, New York, 1888

Bohemian Cigarmakers Working at Home, c. 1890

◄ *Photographs such as the one at left, with children loitering in a slum alley littered with garbage and fallen bricks, helped to bring about truancy laws to keep the young in school, and to provide playgrounds for their use when school was not in session. "Honest play is interdicted in the streets," Riis wrote. "The policeman arrests the ball-tossers, and there is no room in the backyard."*

A great deal of manufacturing—including the family cigarmaking shown above—was carried on at home in the 1890s, enabling employers to evade laws regulating labor conditions. Only when photographs like this were widely published did Americans realize the extent of home labor, and the degree to which it kept youngsters from studying and mothers from caring for children.

Cellar Dwelling on Ludlow Street, New York, c. 1890

Indoors the reeking tenements had peeling walls, canted floors and little ventilation. The woman living in the cramped cellar dwelling shown above has at last surrendered to the pervasive filth: her dishes, her floor, even her clothes have clearly gone long unwashed. "From these tenements," the outraged photographer wrote, comes "the vexed question 'Is life worth living?' "

Stale Beer Dive on Mulberry Bend, New York, c. 1890

The infamous Bend—which Riis located "where Mulberry Street crooks like an elbow"—had a shockingly high crime rate, some of it emanating from all-night restaurants like this one, where the homeless could nap over stale beer, and where the owner was usually beholden to a political boss. Of all the changes his pictures effected, Riis was perhaps proudest of reforming the Bend.

Vocational School on West 52nd Street, New York, c. 1894

A simple photograph of children jammed in a classroom obviously meant for half their number becomes a plea for better schools. Then as now, a chance for a decent education, even a measure of vocational training, seemed the best hope for the younger generation to escape the slums.

Night School in Seventh Avenue Lodging House, date unknown

Night-school students, at a class after working all day, often found it difficult to pay attention. Though such situations were hardly ideal, the reformer-photographer agreed that night schools, such as those provided by the Children's Aid Society, were better than no schooling at all.

Lewis Hine: Abolishing Child Labor

With Lewis Hine, documentary photography moved out of the slums of New York and across the country—wherever contemporary reform movements led the way. One of Hine's major preoccupations was the abuses of child labor, and he documented this widespread evil to provide photographic evidence for the reformers to circulate and to take into the lobbies of state legislatures. To do so he left a position as a science teacher in a New York private school. But he still regarded himself a teacher—and thought of the magazine-reading public as his class.

Unlike Jacob Riis, who considered himself primarily a reporter and who used his pictures solely to supplement his written reportage, Hine relied chiefly on the camera to communicate his message and wrote very little once he had left the classroom. "If I could tell the story in words," he said, "I wouldn't have to lug a camera."

When the National Child Labor Committee enlisted Hine in its crusade in 1908, there was some legislation to protect children from exploitation, but the laws were few, weak and not vigorously enforced. Children worked in coal mines *(opposite);* in West Virginia, for example, they toiled from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., breathing noxious coal gas and in constant danger from rolling rail cars. In the Southern cotton mills they worked even longer, from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m., and were sometimes mutilated by dangerous machinery (whose placards of safety cautions they usually could not read). It was not that all child labor resulted from insufficient legislation or lack of law enforcement. Sometimes a foreman was inclined to wink at the law because the child's parents—often impoverished immigrants—could not survive unless every member of the family was at work earning at least a few pennies a day.

The job Hine assigned himself was formidable. He often had to overcome the hostility of owners, foremen and guards in factories. Sometimes he got by the gates only by posing as an insurance salesman or a fire inspector. Once inside, he had to make friends with the children to get them to talk while he surreptitiously took notes (he used the buttons on his vest to estimate the child's height). One of his biggest problems was to keep the children at ease even when startled by a burst of magnesium flashlight powder. Somehow, between 1908 and 1921, Hine made 5,000 pictures for the National Child Labor Committee, and the pathetic little drudges he portrayed in factories and mines, mills and tenements, bowling alleys and city streets, persuaded the voting public and legislators of the urgent need for reform.

Not all of Hine's purpose was exposé. During World War I the Red Cross hired him to document its efforts to help war victims—and hence persuade the public of the need for support. The Red Cross later gave him a similar assignment at home. In the performance of that task *(pages 64-65)* Hine turned documentary photography from muckraking to a new and positive role.

Breaker boys—who separated by hand the useless slate from a mine's yield of coal—gather for Hine's camera before the entrance to a Pennsylvania coal shaft. By the time this picture was taken, many states had laws prohibiting mine operators from hiring boys under 14, but some foremen took them as young as six. At whatever age, the children worked adult hours. Pictures such as this helped point to the evils of child labor, prompting enforcement of laws already on the books and enactment of better ones. ►

Breaker Boys, Pennsylvania, c. 1910

Messenger Boy, Indianapolis, 1908

In 1908 this night messenger boy was at work at 10 p.m. The National Child Labor Committee claimed that "the messenger's cap is an open sesame to the underworld." It "enables him to get liquor at illegal hours or to procure opium . . . where plain citizens would be refused."

Newsboy, Washington, D.C., 1912

Children as young as five frequently hawked newspapers, and the photographer reported: "I found them wandering about until 1:00 and 2:00 a.m." Even by daylight the job was dangerous. Opposition newspapers sometimes paid older bullies to harass the little peddlers.

Pin Boys in a Bowling Alley, 1910

◄ *The hour was 3 a.m. when these boys were photographed at work in a bowling alley. Three pin boys were kept out of the picture by the boss, presumably because they were even younger.*

A casualty of a mill accident, this one-armed boy gamely posed for Hine in about 1910. "We don't have many accidents," one foreman said at the time. "Once in a while a finger is mashed or a foot, but it doesn't amount to anything."

Victim of a Mill Accident, c. 1910

Family Making Garters at Home, c. 1910

◄ *Some 13,000 tenement houses in New York City were licensed by the state as places where families could manufacture small articles on a piecework basis. But there were also many unlicensed premises, such as the one at left, where young and old labored day and night to earn less than 10 cents an hour making such things as the sock garters this family is producing. A New York State survey in 1912 found that 25 per cent of those working at home were under 10 years old; 45 per cent of them were under 14.*

This youngster in soiled work apron and bare feet, leaning on a thread-spinning frame in a North Carolina cotton mill, was one of approximately 40,000 children under the age of 16 employed in the cotton mills. Despite photographs like this, efforts to legislate reform met resistance. One state officer explained: "The cotton mill people are the poorest paid workers in the country. They have to put their children in the mills."

Spinner at Frame, North Carolina, 1908

Russian Child, 1918

◄ *Childish cheer in the midst of disaster—a grinning girl among World War I refugees in Paris—made a touching portrait. Pictures like this were used by the Red Cross to encourage donations.*

Documenting the work of the Red Cross closer to home, Hine photographed victims of a drought in Kentucky during the 1930s. He found this young man perched on a school bench, holding a milk bottle given him by the Red Cross.

Undernourished Child, Kentucky, 1933

The FSA: Crisis on the Farm

By the 1930s the camera had proved itself a valuable weapon in the reformers' battles against the evils of city slums and child labor. Now came the greatest challenge of all: the Depression. This time, with the nation's entire economic structure in deep trouble, the impetus for reform came from the government itself.

The economic blight of the Depression struck rural America with extra force because it was intensified by a devastating natural blight: drought and dust storms followed the collapse in the market for agricultural products. To help meet the crisis on the farms—on which 33 million Americans, a quarter of the population, lived in 1935—President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Rexford Guy Tugwell, a Columbia University economics professor, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture. Tugwell's aid to the farmers included low-interest loans and outright subsidies. The subsidy program was expensive and controversial, and Tugwell realized that photographs could help prove both the extent of the problem and the effectiveness of the cure. To direct the procurement of the pictures he recruited a former protegé named Roy Stryker.

Tugwell's choice was a stroke of genius. As a young economics instructor at Columbia, Stryker had enlivened his classes with photographs, using them to make urban students see the reality behind facts and figures on crops and acreage. In Washington he applied a similar technique. Although his job was only to record the activities of a single branch of the Department of Agriculture, the Resettlement Administration (later the Farm Security Administration), he left behind a collection of pictures that has become a classic archive of documentary photography.

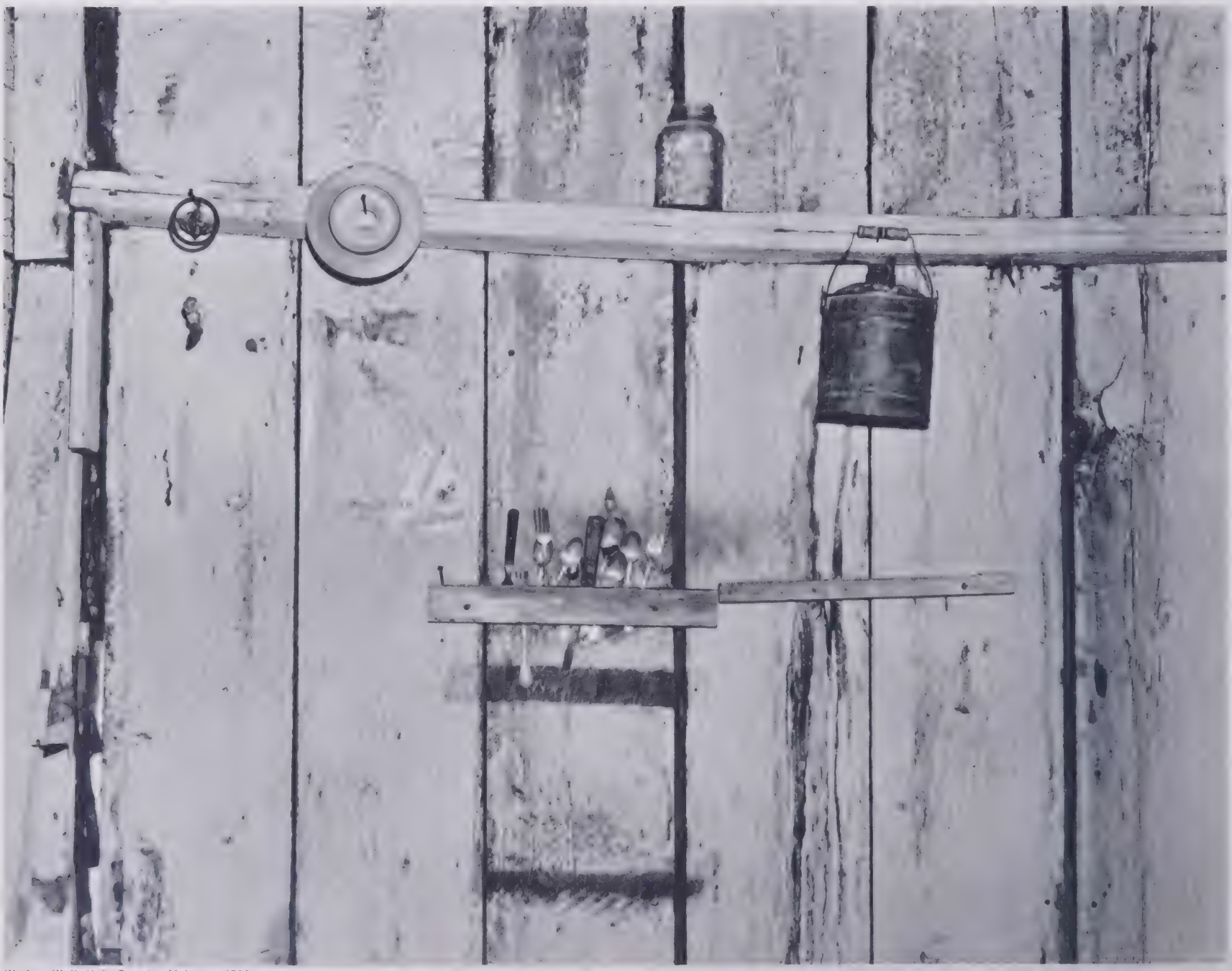
No photographer himself, Stryker recruited a remarkable band of young talents, only a few of whom can be represented in the gallery following. And he exercised his considerable gift for teaching, instructing and cajoling to transform them into anthropologists, economists and historians, as well as reporters and commentators. Carl Mydans, one of that now-famous group, recalls his discussion with Stryker before his first assignment, a trip into the Deep South. Stryker asked casually, "What do you know about cotton?" Mydans replied that he did not know much. "And we sat down and we talked almost all day about cotton," Mydans remembers. "We went to lunch and we went to dinner, and we talked well into the night. We talked about cotton as an agricultural product, the history of cotton in the South, what cotton did to the history of the U.S.A. and how it affected areas outside the U.S.A. By the end of that evening, I was ready to go off and photograph cotton."

Although Stryker and his photographers were accused of boondoggling, the pictures fulfilled the government's initial aims, by documenting both the need for the farm relief programs and their ultimate success. For photography the pictures did far more. They were not only eloquent records but such compelling works of art that they drew public attention to a form of photography that had been taken for granted. They were the first documentary photographs to be known as such; thus the FSA men and women who made them were the first people ever called documentary photographers.

The unrelenting realism that became a hallmark of FSA photographs is plain in every detail of this fact-crammed picture of an Alabama sharecropper's family: shoeless feet; tattered, dirty clothing; a peeling bedstead supporting a rumpled bed; a bare and cracked floor. Touches of sad beauty, such as the eyes of the young girl, gave such scenes the power to shock America with the plight of "one third of a nation." But they also offered desperately needed reassurance. For in the midst of misery this photograph finds strength: eager-faced boy, steely-eyed grandmother, even grim-faced father and mother proclaiming an unconquerable will to survive. ►

WALKER EVANS: *Alabama*, 1936

Walker Evans



Kitchen Wall, Hale County, Alabama, 1936

The least sentimental and in terms of the art of photography the most influential of all the FSA photographers was Walker Evans. Among other things, Evans helped set the FSA style of documentary simplicity and directness. One of his favorite subjects was architecture; but whether the subject was a peeling billboard, a cabin wall *(left)* or a family group *(page 67),* his photographs resemble still lifes.

Evans is a symbolist: he makes the temporal seem eternal and the specific seem general. In his days with the FSA team he achieved his effects—strikingly spare and stunningly textured—by shooting head on, rarely from an angle, and by using an 8 x 10 view camera set at a small aperture, which gave his pictures amazingly fine detail and crisp focus that conveyed coldly sharp realism. Evans was the only FSA photographer who regularly used such a large negative size, and although others emulated his style, none quite duplicated the effect. Even after the passage of a generation has obscured the wounds of the Depression, Walker Evans' pictures of the most wretched subject matter still have a starkly evocative beauty.

◄ *Making the most of the fine detail that is attainable only with a large view camera set at a small aperture, the photographer recorded the spare beauty of line and texture on this rude cabin wall, where a tenant farmer's wife has hung her meager assortment of kitchen utensils against the rough splintered boards.*

A cotton farmer's wife stands before her tenant cabin like a specimen pinned to a wooden wall, her bleak and immobile stare fixed on the photographer's camera—as though her miseries had rendered her incapable of expression.

Tenant Farmer's Wife, Hale County, Alabama, 1936

Mealtime, Forrest City, Arkansas, 1937

Empty plates clasped by anonymous hands in a jammed queue speak tersely of hunger in a time of disaster. The figures, waiting for food at a camp for flood refugees, are reminders of the persistent paradox of scarcity in the land of plenty.

Street Scene, Atlanta, Georgia, 1936

In an acid comment by Evans on the gap between reality and the American dream, two bleakly similar houses on a dreary Atlanta street form a backdrop for billboard promises of celluloid romance. The irony is heightened by one billboard showing a current movie star, Carole Lombard, with the blackened eye her role called for.

Ben Shahn

FSA Rehabilitation Clients, Boone County, Arkansas, 1935

Ben Shahn came to the FSA through a side door. A renowned painter, he was contributing paintings and posters to the FSA, and was lured into Roy Stryker's orbit partly because he had once shared a studio with Walker Evans and partly because he had found the camera useful as an instant sketch pad.

For the FSA, Shahn took a three-month excursion through the South and Southwest and returned so excited by photography that he thought of making it his life's work. He did not, but after he returned to painting, he acknowledged that his FSA experience with the camera influenced his later art. His photography also made a great contribution to the FSA, for his painter's conception made many of his photographs persuasive works of art.

Framed by the spare lines of the cabin that seem to indicate the limits of their life, an Arkansas farm woman and her daughter (above) seem to be stopped in motion, yet with nowhere to go.

In another example of life suddenly frozen into immobility, the artist-photographer caught this couple and child as they passed in front of a soda fountain. The family is arrested in one of those moments of uneasiness so characteristic of the depressed times when even the Sunday best that should bespeak confidence and tranquillity could not mask fear of the future. ►

Man, Woman and Child, Smithland, Kentucky, 1935

Cotton Pickers at Work, Pulaski County, Arkansas, 1935

The artist's eye spotted these sacks as they trailed like regal trains behind the cotton pickers, who, painfully stooped, trudged up and down along the rows to gather the harvest for wages that sometimes were as low as 45 cents a day.

Cotton Pickers, Pulaski County, Arkansas, 1935

Warily confronting the camera, cotton pickers are photographed against the rough backdrop of a wooden shed. Shahn used to meet the workers at 5:30 in the morning, photograph them during their long working day, and then drive them to the company store where, he recalled, they would buy soft drinks and "drink up in one sweep one quarter of their earnings."

Sharecroppers' Children on Sunday, Little Rock, Arkansas, 1935

Sunday clothes sharpen the message of poverty conveyed by the warped boards of the cabin and the splintery, rickety bench. Yet there is art as well as social significance in Shahn's picture. The range of facial expressions and bodily contours is united by the classical triangular composition in which the family have arranged themselves.

A woman and a girl waiting in line for relief payments outside an office in Urbana, Ohio, look in different directions, pointing up a series of opposites: age and youth, contemplation and observation. Yet they are drawn together in their common engagement, waiting for the relief money that will keep them alive through jobless times. ►

On Relief, Urbana, Ohio, 1938

Dorothea Lange

Sharecropper and Family, Georgia, 1938

Of all the photographers who served the Farm Security Administration, none had a greater effect than Dorothea Lange, a petite woman with a soft voice that could scarcely be heard across a room. In the earliest days of the FSA, Roy Stryker saw a portfolio of her pictures of migrant farm laborers in California; they moved him to hire her forthwith. As a consummate artist she served thereafter as an exemplar for many other FSA photographers.

Dorothea Lange's pictures had an epic quality, with an added human and almost romantic vitality. Her subjects came alive; even her landscapes were vivid reminders of the sufferings of the human tenants who had given up and fled the worn-out acres. And if ever photographs succeeded at persuasion, Dorothea Lange's did; her pictures of farmers made homeless by the dust storms, for example, are credited with being largely responsible for the government's setting up camps for the migrants in 1935.

A tobacco sharecropper in Georgia looks up from his task of patching an inner tube, while his children wait to get moving again. Like a migrant laborer, a tenant farmer found a car important to his work—without it, he couldn't get his crop to market—but much of his time was spent fixing it.

Seemingly impassive as stone monuments, members of a gang of migrant laborers bend to a crop of lettuce in a posture they maintained all day long. But the physical torment so graphically rendered in this picture is only part of its subject, for it also celebrates the durability of spirit that enabled people to survive under such conditions. ►

Lettuce Cutters, Salinas Valley, California, 1935

Child and Her Mother, Washington State, 1939

A forlorn child leans against barbed wire on the Yakima Valley farm where her family subsists with government aid, while her mother watches her from behind the fencing that separates them from the world outside. Federal loans helped such families buy seed, stock and fertilizer.

Behind another barbed-wire fence (right), no longer serving its purpose, the parched Dust Bowl stretches beyond empty buildings to the horizon. Photographer Lange managed to convey as poignant a message in this lifeless scene as in the picture of mother and daughter above. ►

Portrait of the Dust Bowl, Texas, 1938

Russell Lee

Mother and Child, Oklahoma, 1939

A small girl watches with tender concern as her sick mother, a farm laborer, lies down to rest on a stony patch of ground. The poignant scene gains much of its realism and immediacy from the harsh lighting, deliberately created with a flash bulb.

To the technical skill, artistry and compassion that had enriched the FSA pictures, Russell Lee added another value. He recognized the need for communication between groups of Americans separated by social class and geography, and he possessed the depth of human understanding to make photographs that filled that need. "America was very provincial in those days," he said. "City people didn't know about people living in the country; rural people didn't know about the city. One of our jobs was to acquaint city dwellers with the rural way of life."

To that task Lee brought a journalist's eye for the significant and a tongue for friendly persuasion. When a woman in the Midwest resisted his efforts to photograph her, he told her reassuringly: "Lady, you're having a hard time, and a lot of people don't think you're having such a hard time. We want to show them that you're a human being, a nice human being, but you're having troubles." Lee got not only the pictures he set out after, but others of several of her friends—and invitations to share their meager meals. Such understanding enabled Lee to get some of the most revealing and poignant studies of rural America made in the '30s.

Sharecropper's Wife and Children, Missouri, 1938

A stolid farm mother permits a glimpse into a bitter life as she stands in her cabin doorway, holding her crying infant while an older child looks on from the emptiness of their poor home.

Fourth of July Picnic, Vale, Oregon, 1941

Lee found this family celebrating America's birthday with a quiet but crowded outing in a park. Here, cut off from other celebrants by parked cars, the mother serves up a homemade picnic to her brood while the father smokes in silence.

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SID GROSSMAN: *San Gennaro Festival*, 1949

The Photo League

"A True Image of the World"

In 1928, the year before the stock market crashed and the Great Depression began to spread over the country, a group of New York City motion-picture and still photographers formed an organization called the Film and Photo League. Their major aim was to record events of social significance that were often not reported in the commercial press: street demonstrations against unemployment and for home relief and, since much of their work was commissioned by unions, labor strife—strikes, picket lines, clashes between police and pickets. In 1936 the motion-picture men broke away from the group, some going on to produce documentary films, others continuing to make newsreels. The rest renamed themselves the Photo League and based their documentary work on a broadly conceived credo. It read in part:

"Photography has tremendous social value. Upon the photographer rests the responsibility and duty of recording a true image of the world as it is today. . . . The Photo League [works] in keeping with the traditions set by Stieglitz, Strand, Abbott and Weston. Photography has long suffered . . . from the stultifying influence of the pictorialists. . . . The Photo League's task is to put the camera back in the hands of honest photographers, who will use it to photograph America."

Though hampered by a lack of money (some League members were still in school, others held low-paying clerical jobs, a few eked out a living photographing for merchandise catalogues), they scraped together the rent for a loft, which they remodeled to serve as exhibition room, lecture hall, classroom and darkroom all in one. They approached such big-name photographers as Paul Strand, Berenice Abbott and Margaret Bourke-White to form a board of advisers. Their spirit was infectious, and the big names consented. Encouraged, the youngsters began persuading other members of the photographic elite—Roy Stryker, Edward Weston, Robert Capa, Dorothea Lange—to speak at the League and to allow their work to be exhibited there. Soon they began issuing a monthly mimeographed bulletin, "Photo Notes," devoted to documentary photography. It contained original articles, reviews of current shows and reprints of essays on the subject, as well as news of League events. Distributed free to galleries, museums and photographers, "Photo Notes" had wide influence and drew more members into the League, where for no charge they could hear and interview such professionals as Henri Cartier-Bresson, Ansel Adams or Lewis Hine. After Hine died in 1940, most of his work was given to the League.

A major part of the League was its school, where students were taught the history, techniques and esthetics of photography. Just as membership dues were kept low (seven dollars a year), the school's tuition was about $30 for a 12-session semester, and no one was turned away for lack of funds. Probably the school's most important course was a workshop on documentary pho-

tography taught by the late Sid Grossman *(pages 94-95),* a gifted if controversial instructor. Former League members describe him as "brilliant," "a man you either loved or hated," "authoritarian and demanding but at the same time a sentimentalist," "rough on everybody but underneath gentle." His analyses of students' work could be abrasive, and some students weathered only one class, but a survivor expresses the graduates' general opinion: "Grossman excited you about photography; he was a great teacher."

The workshop developed group projects that sent students out to photograph the neighborhoods of Manhattan, for, as a publicity pamphlet put it, "The streets of New York . . . are the League's most important studios." Many of the students were city born and bred, many knew the tenement areas first hand, and they brought the insider's sensitivity to bear on their work. From these projects came the Photo League Documents: series of pictures that interpreted photographically the people of certain areas—Pitt Street, Chelsea, Park Avenue, Harlem—and their way of life.

During World War II, though most of its members were in the armed forces overseas, the League produced documentary photographs for the Red Cross and servicemen's organizations. By 1947 the organization could boast that more than 1,500 photographers had been trained in its school and darkrooms. Money was always in short supply, but at the end of that year, after strenuous fund-raising, the group had substantially more than 100 members and was preparing to move to larger quarters in the basement of a Greenwich Village hotel. Then an event occurred that stunned its membership: in December the Photo League appeared on a list, issued by Attorney General Tom Clark, of organizations the Department of Justice had found to be subversive to the United States. The League was shocked; it categorically denied the charge of disloyalty, describing itself as "a photographic and not a political organization." Membership took a sudden leap, as photographers from as far away as California rallied to the League's support; and for a time things went well. But in May 1949, a former member, testifying at a trial of Communist leaders, implied that the League was a Communist-front organization. The League challenged anyone to "present an iota of evidence to prove our activities as subversive," and reiterated its stand that it was a purely photographic group. By this time, however, political tensions brought about by the Cold War had increased, and some League members, facing serious professional ostracism, felt compelled to resign. Young people, more affluent than the League generation had been and with a variety of photographic schools to choose from, did not replace the members who left. By 1951 the Photo League had ceased to exist. The essay that follows presents the work of some of its members, along with their comments about the League and the influential documentary photography it produced. □

The Photo League

Sol Libsohn

Washington's Birthday, 1940

"These pictures," explains Sol Libsohn, a leader in the Photo League from its early days, "combine two ideas we had—one, that by its nature the camera actually sees more sharply than the eye, and that this quality of the medium should not be discarded lightly as we believed the pictorialists had done. And secondly, that unless you feel an involvement with people, with the human condition, you should not photograph them at all. I took the one above at a holiday sale at a large department store in Manhattan. They were selling radios for a penny, things like that. I was struck by the visual juxtaposition of these people, strangers, closed in against each other for warmth against the chill February air. They were there for bargains, but what fascinated me was an instinct I had that they really seemed to need something completely different, something spiritual, even if they didn't know it.

"The picture on the right was taken on the Lower East Side. I had a deep interest in the ordinary people who lived there then, and when I saw that group I was overcome by another feeling I often have: that streets are like stage settings, and sometimes you can catch people on those stages in very penetrating tableaux."

Rivington Street, 1945

Walter Rosenblum

Pitt Street, 1939

"The Photo League had a community darkroom, and that's why I joined," says Walter Rosenblum. "I had learned photography at a Boys' Club, and when I started going to college at night in 1937, I heard about this group that charged a small membership fee and whose members had access to a darkroom that was always open. The equipment was old but serviceable; you paid 10 cents for the chemicals and supplied your own paper. There were always other people working, and I got to know them and began taking classes and doing odd jobs, and finally I was hired as office secretary for $10 a week. I found teachers, took registration, collected dues, arranged exhibits. I was there all the time—it became my life. Later I became editor of 'Photo Notes' and was president of the League for several terms between 1941 and 1948.

"The picture at left was part of my Pitt Street Document, done for a workshop conducted by Sid Grossman. I took pictures of the kids who hung around the candy store on the Lower East Side block for six months, so I knew them pretty well, including this boy. I made his portrait with an old hand-held folding view camera called a Maximar that is no longer manufactured. I wanted to express the strength of character in his face, the toughness his spirit had developed, growing up among those tenements in the background. The Puerto Rican girls at right are from a series I did on 105th Street in Spanish Harlem. It was an off-the-cuff shot with an early Nikon. I didn't know them, but they were such beautiful youngsters—one about eight and the other around 15—that when I saw them I was instantly captivated."

105th Street, 1946

Sid Grossman

Sid Grossman was 21 years old, fresh out of City College of New York and working as a pick-and-shovel man on a Works Progress Administration street-repair crew in 1936, when he joined and helped reorganize the Photo League. He later became the director of the Photo League School, whose aim he said was "to help the student to develop a personal approach to photography . . . to make his individual interpretations of his immediate world."

Grossman applied this aim in his own photographs of such familiar subjects as the Coney Island bathers shown on these pages. His style, recalls a former League member, "was really revolutionary at the time. Sid was one of the first photographers to chop off pieces of bodies—heads and arms and legs. He would practically get on top of the subject, moving up to what seemed like only a few inches away. It was as if he couldn't get close enough to what he was trying to say." In the picture at lower right, he seems to have joined the tangle of merrymakers, to have gotten so intimate that he is one of them and they are no longer aware of his camera.

Grossman, who died in 1955, once said, "The function of the photographer is to help people understand the world about them." He would ask his students if they ever took pictures just for themselves. He would answer for them: "No, you don't," and add that he did not himself, "though I have boxes of pictures that nobody wants to buy. . . . I know the time will come that they will be usable and I will have won."

Coney Island, 1947-1948

The Photo League

Jerome Liebling

"I was about 22, a World War II vet studying photography on the GI Bill at Brooklyn College in 1947 when my teacher, Walter Rosenblum, suggested I join the Photo League," Jerome Liebling recalls. "Since I was a city boy I liked the League idea of going into the streets to photograph New York.

"I took the picture at left with a 2¼ x 2¼ Super Ikonta B, a camera with a convenient eye-level rangefinder viewer, when I revisited my old East Side neighborhood. It was changing and becoming an artists'-colony extension of Greenwich Village, but I managed to find this view of the traditional tenement architecture and the woman in the classical tenement-dweller's pose —leaning out of the window to get some air and to watch the life going on in the street.

"In 1949 I was in Paul Strand's class at the Photo League, where we documented the area near Knickerbocker Village, a Manhattan housing project that had been built in 1934 on the site of a notorious slum. By the time we photographed it 15 years later, new decay was evident. By shooting this youngster *[right]* without much environmental detail, I wanted to invite the viewer's sympathetic interest in him, from his curious gaze to his gracefully crossed hands to the poverty betrayed by his cheaply made, broken shoes."

Knickerbocker Village, 1949

Jack Manning

Boy with Cymbals, 1938

"The Photo League was a few blocks from the high school I went to in 1937, so I used to visit their exhibits," says Jack Manning, now a photographer for *The New York Times.* "I had a Rollei and I had begun to teach myself photography. One day I showed Aaron Siskind some of my pictures, and he invited me to join the League's Harlem Document group *[pages 102, 110]*, which he headed. You had to know your craft for that project because you went out and worked on your own. I was with the project for two years and I liked it so well that in my spare time I still shoot the same kind of documentaries—I've done them on the slums of Puerto Rico, on the Puerto Ricans in New York City and on the people of Spain.

"The picture at left was part of a series I took of 20 kids at a settlement house in Harlem who were forming a band. The one at right was taken on an Easter Sunday—I approached the young lady and told her about the Document project and then asked her if I could take her picture, and she was very willing to pose for me.

"I learned from the League that a documentary photographer has to be technically good enough so that he can concentrate on content, in order to make honest statements with his camera that will serve to help people. The critics disparaged us by calling us the Ashcan School of Photography—but I liked the title, and was happy to be identified as an Ashcan photographer."

Easter Sunday in Harlem, 1938

Morris Huberland

Three Women, 1955

Morris Huberland says: "When I joined the Photo League around 1940, LIFE and *Look* magazines were developing the photo essay, and I went to the League to hear photojournalists like Eliot Elisofon lecture on this new form.

"Of all the activities at the League, the esthetic criticism at the symposiums was most important to me. The talk was broadly based; we knew the history of photography, and we studied the nature pictures done by Edward Weston and Ansel Adams as well as the documentary work of Atget *(pages 36-42)* and Lewis Hine *(pages 56-65)*.

"I define documentary photography as an expression of how people relate to their environment. I easily identified with the street documentaries I saw at the League, for I had pictures like that in my own files. I had been brought to New York as a child from Germany and was a product of the ghetto, and what I loved about the city was that it was a series of ethnic neighborhoods, each with its distinct flavor. I roamed those neighborhoods, photographing the various national groups. In the early days I used a somewhat bulky Voigtlander-Avis view camera. But for street pictures I switched to smaller cameras when they became available since they made it easier to capture the passing moment. A Rollei took the picture of the boy at right in Hell's Kitchen, a predominantly Irish area—his extraordinarily expressive eyes made him stand out from the other kids. I used the even smaller 35mm Pentax to take the picture at left of Puerto Rican women in Spanish Harlem. Just as I snapped the shutter, the girl in the middle noticed me and became perplexed. But I chatted with them and we parted friends."

City Boy, 1948

Aaron Siskind

Harlem Cabaret, 1938

"I was a schoolteacher who used to take pictures as a hobby with a little 12-dollar camera in 1932 when I went to an exhibit at the old Film and Photo League, and the pictures of men made homeless by the Depression stirred me," Aaron Siskind remembers. "So I joined and some years later organized the Feature Group, where rank beginners went out to document city areas. A black journalist suggested we do a study of Harlem, and that's how the Harlem Document came about.

"I went out just as the others did, even though I was directing the project. These pictures were taken with a 40-dollar Voigtlander-Avis camera and two lights set on stands. The shot on the left was made at a little nightclub—in those hard times there were very few customers and those few were white. The picture at right was at the Savoy Ballroom, where every night for 50 cents people could shag and stomp to two dance bands. I set up my gear on the edge of the floor and then I induced this couple to dance into the area.

"To me documentary photography means making a picture so that the viewer doesn't think about the man who made the picture. At its esthetic core is a very old tradition in art: naturalism. And its purpose is to document all facets of social relationships."

Dancers at the Savoy Ballroom, 1937

Summer Afternoon In the Slums, 1948

Ruth Orkin

Ruth Orkin's connection with the Photo League was formalized by politics. She recalls: "I had been going to forums at the League for quite a while, but I became an actual member as an act of principle, two weeks after the Attorney General's list *[page 89]* came out. I never took any classes—that was a good thing about the League, it wasn't strictly classroom. It was also someplace for photographers to get together and learn from each other informally, like cafés in European cities where artists meet to keep up with what's going on. To me, documentary photography is what's real. And reality is what moves people in the long run.

"This picture is a study of the bleak, decaying streets in an old section of Greenwich Village. The building on the left, a warehouse, was clattering with noise all the time. The street wasn't well paved—the cobblestones went back to the 18th Century and the dirt lodged between them. In the right background is a wholesale meat market, which added to the street litter.

"I took the picture just as a gust of wind came up and blew grit swirling around the people who were sunning themselves on the corner. They were Polish and Irish, very poor, who lived there. It was a neighborhood that was always alive with people, even in the midst of the dirt and decay."

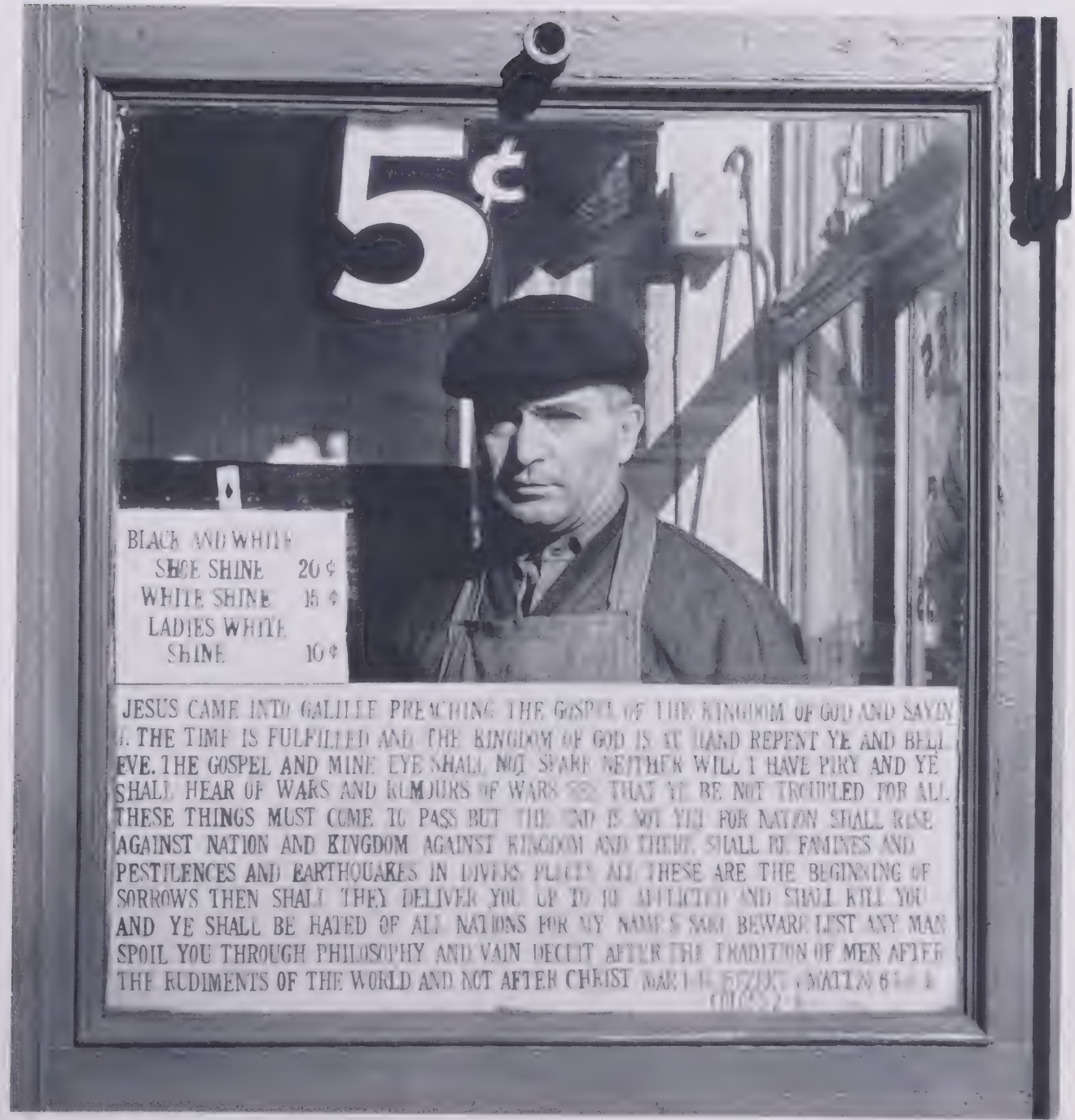
Eliot Elisofon

Third Avenue Elevated, 1936

Eliot Elisofon, once president of the Photo League, remembers these pictures as being "made at a time when I was learning how to record the New York scene—what it looked like, where the people were. It was a way of saying, 'This is New York.' I took both of them with a 3¼ x 4¼ Speed Graphic, a slightly smaller version of the hand-held view camera press photographers then used, and in this picture *[left]* what interested me was the design that the structure of the elevated lent itself to. There was also the repetition of the words of the toothpaste ad under each step—in themselves the words were almost meaningless, but the pattern they formed reinforced the design.

"What fascinated me about the shoeshine man *[right]* was the fact that he had printed the passages from the Bible letter by letter with rubber stamps. He was a man of deep religious feeling, and he had put his message in the window of his booth for everyone to read.

"I came to the Photo League around 1935, after I had been photographing for a year or two. I wanted to learn formal technique combined with meaningful subject matter—social conditions interested me. I remember there were all kinds of heated discussions about technique and craftsmanship as well as esthetics. In retrospect I suppose we were pretty square, but we were just trying to say something with a camera."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Shoeshine Man, 1936

Arthur Leipzig

Watching Santa, 1944

"I took these pictures of kids in Brooklyn, where I was born and brought up," says Arthur Leipzig. "To make the one above, I stood inside a store window, hidden behind a Christmas display, and shot the kids looking through the window at a mechanical Santa Claus. The one at right is from a series on street games in the city. My inspiration was a picture by Pieter Bruegel, the Flemish painter, called 'Children's Games.' It shows scores of half-grown kids, playing some 80 different games. Some of them, I found as I wandered around, were still being played today, even though the painting was done in 1560. But mainly I noticed that poor kids in urban areas have their imaginations and very little else to work with. In this picture, the kids had some chalk, so they made up chalk games.

"I wouldn't label my work documentary," Leipzig says. "I just photograph the way I feel—but the League helped me to learn to do that." He joined the Photo League as a beginning photographer in 1942, attracted by its low fees. He recalls: "Two weeks in Sid Grossman's class, and I knew what I wanted to be. Six months later I got a job as a newspaper photographer, but I stayed in the League till around 1949."

Chalk Games, 1943

Park Avenue, South, 1938

When Brooklyn-born Morris Engel was 18, in 1936, he noticed a Photo League advertisement in a newspaper. Learning photography sounded interesting; he decided to join and enrolled in the six-dollar course, a bargain even in that Depression year.

Once he had learned some of the basics of picture-taking, Engel joined several other young photographers in the Photo League Feature Group. Headed by Aaron Siskind *[pages 102-103]*, the group first turned its attention to Harlem and produced what came to be called the Harlem Document. Engel recalls that at the time he had a job in a bank and was able to do photography only on weekends. He tramped around Harlem on Sundays, shooting roll after roll of film with his Rolleiflex. The picture at right of a Harlem candy and newspaper vendor staring out of a cluttered street-corner stand became part of the completed Document.

Engel also worked on another project known as "Park Avenue North and South." Park Avenue was sharply divided at 96th Street; to the north were slums, to the south an elegant residential area. The picture at left, taken well south of this dividing line, shows not only the nature of that well-to-do part of New York, but also captures a subtle relationship of individuals.

Harlem Merchant, 1937

Dan Weiner

Street Procession, 1947

"These are photographs I feel I must do," Dan Weiner once said. "I'm interested in . . . how people live and in finding out how they are adjusting to the whole question of urbanization and industrialization."

The pictures on these pages were taken in New York City's Little Italy during the street festival held each September to mark the feast day of San Gennaro, patron saint of Naples. Weiner showed the people of the area celebrating in a manner that had withstood not only the pressures of the urban and industrial society they lived in, but also the drive for "Americanization" that has caused many Old World customs to die out among immigrant groups. At left, members of a fraternal society march beside a float bearing a figure of the saint; dollar bills for charity, passed up by the crowd, have been pinned to the figure. In the light-festooned street *(right),* throngs listening to a singer reflect a never-satisfied longing for the Old Country.

Weiner joined the Photo League before World War II as a self-taught photographer, and for several years taught a course for advanced students. On a magazine assignment in Kentucky in 1959, he was killed in a plane crash.

Street Festival, 1947

Lou Bernstein

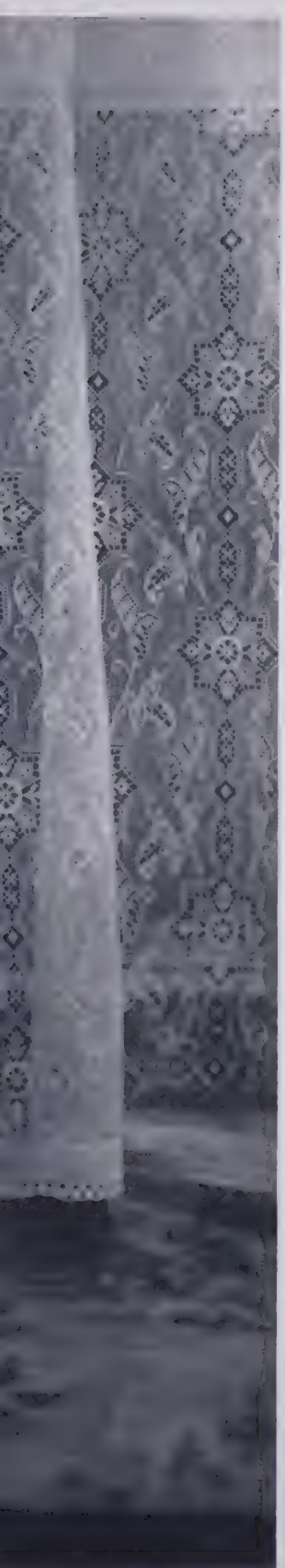
Man and Wife, 1941

Shortly after Lou Bernstein took up photography as a hobby he joined a camera club, but "their outlook was too pedagogical," he says, "so I tried the Photo League instead. I thought of photography as a means of self-expression and the League's philosophy suited me because it emphasized the expression of personal viewpoints, even in the photographs we took of social conditions. I think that's an attitude that is missing in almost all of the photography schools today; there should be an institution that encourages young photographers to express themselves."

The picture at left is of a Brooklyn building superintendent and his wife, who were acquaintances of Bernstein. He says of it, "I think the man's attitude tells something about how we cherish a person who is close to us, but at the same time I had the feeling he was flaunting himself." The picture at right was taken at Coney Island. Bernstein had been "watching how this baby was playing with her father, showing respect for him one moment and taking advantage of him the next, the way babies sometimes do. Here she's taken him by surprise, and gotten the upper hand for a second. I think pictures often reveal motives we don't even know about ourselves in our relationships with people—but exactly what they are is not for me to say; it's for each viewer to decide for himself."

Coney Island, 1943

Rose Caddo, 1947



Bill Witt

Around 1940, when Bill Witt was working as a photographer in a New York City studio, one of his coworkers, Dan Weiner *(pages 112-113),* brought him into the League. "Except for my four years in the service," says Witt, "I stayed in the League until 1949. I even taught a course in advanced technique for one semester after the war. The League meant different things to different people. For me, it was the only photographic group at the time that was producing meaningful pictures. I liked the FSA photographers *[Chapter 2],* and I felt that the League was trying to document the East as the FSA had documented the Dust Bowl.

"But I liked to photograph all aspects of life around me, and I was always more interested in esthetics than were many of the people in the League. I remember at the time of a big Photo League show in 1949 I had become interested in nature and abstract photography. I had some pictures of that type in the show, and they raised eyebrows.

"I used a Rollei to take this picture of my grandmother poring over the evening news when she was in her seventies. Since she lived downstairs from us in my house in Newark, I was in and out of her apartment—I was interested in recording the surroundings that old people manage to keep around them, like the old-fashioned lamps and tables she had. And she herself was a very interesting, strong person—she had been brought over from Germany as a child in a sailing ship, she married and had two children, and she lived to be 102."

Lester Talkington

Skipping Rope, 1950

"On my way home from work, I was attracted by the warm, natural joy of this child skipping rope. I sat down in a doorway, which shielded the lens from the sun, and got this shot," says Lester Talkington of the picture at left, taken on a block in Manhattan that borders East Harlem. His camera was a pocket-sized Kodak Vollenda, which he liked because he could carry it around, ready to slip out of his jacket and unfold for candid shots like this one, for which a shutter speed of 1/250 at an aperture of f/8 froze the little girl in mid-air.

A native of Fort Worth, Texas, Talkington began doing photography early, "playing with the family Kodak as a kid." He joined the League in 1947, after his wife, the daughter of a photographer, urged him to develop his craft. In the League he was exposed to "a real wonderful education. Their emphasis was on the documentary, but they didn't *make* you be a documentary photographer. They made you think about what you were doing. I still do documentary work occasionally, but what I get the greatest pleasure out of now is details of nature—like Edward Weston, only I use a 35mm camera and I get something quite different.

"I left the League around 1950 when I moved out of the neighborhood where the meetings were held. By then I had become good enough so that I had to decide whether to give up my job as an ad writer and go into photography full time. Babies were coming, so I stayed with my writing. But the League—they were really great people."

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ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ: *Blind Musician*, 1921

A Commitment to Inspire

To one elite group of documentary photographers, neither the literal reporting of the 19th Century nor the social criticism of the early 20th has sufficed to comment upon the world around them. Their careers extend over some six decades—nearly half the life span of photography itself. They have shared with the photographers in previous chapters the belief that a photograph can convey information accurately and provoke an active response. Yet their goals have been much more ambitious than those of even the most dedicated among their predecessors. Not content to mirror life's passing parade or to lobby through pictures for new laws to relieve poverty and oppression, these documentarians have striven to influence people's basic attitudes. They have hoped that their photographs might end the desire to oppress and exploit, that they might instill tolerance, respect, even love among men.

Five photographers—André Kertész, Paul Strand, Dorothea Lange, Henri Cartier-Bresson and W. Eugene Smith—represent this group on the following pages. All five share lofty human aims, yet each follows a unique approach to documentary photography. Kertész is now recognized as the father of an informal, personal style. It evolved naturally, while he was a very young man, out of his desire to keep a journal of his life. But instead of a pencil and notebook, he used a camera. Every scene he encountered was a subject: people he knew well and people he saw only once, the views he saw daily and the ones he would never see again. The blind violin player on the preceding page is a good example. While visiting a friend outside Budapest, Kertész chanced upon the itinerant musician, who was being led from place to place by his son. Another child, the friend's little boy, approached the pair with childish curiosity, and Kertész recognized the superficially ordinary scene as an extraordinary moment of human confrontation. He never saw the fiddler again, but his instantaneous response provided an inspiring record of gentleness and respect.

In the hands of Paul Strand, the photographing of ordinary people and scenes took on a more aggressive purpose and a stricter discipline. He shares Kertész's view that the world's ordinary people must not be forgotten, but he holds the conviction that they will be destroyed unless they fight those who would exploit them. He uses his camera to aid their cause, whether they be Mexicans, Egyptians, Frenchmen or Hebrideans. With documents of their faces and their works, he seeks to convince the viewer of their dignity and nobility. People in Strand's photographs seem to stare out in defiance of those who would crush them.

Henri Cartier-Bresson acknowledges Kertész as his teacher, and the work of the two men bears a similarity in its concern with every phase of human activity—whether play or work, love or war. But Cartier-Bresson imbues his pictures with a unique sense of time. They record what he calls the decisive

moment, the instant when a mood is best expressed. Those shown here are not action pictures, although they may stop some movement of body or hand. What they freeze is attitude, the glance of an eye, the tilt of a head, the twist of a torso—of one person or several in one picture. His genius is to sense when a combination of expressions and postures communicates his message, and in that instant, to record the reality, refined and concentrated, of the pleasures and pains of ordinary experience.

Dorothea Lange, on the other hand, spent little time documenting the ordinary. One day early in the Depression, when she was working as a portrait photographer, she was drawn out of her studio by the realization that "outside the world was just in smithereens." From that day onward, her place was "outside." She used her camera for nearly 30 years to try to pick up the pieces of a shattered world. She deplored the miseries wrought by both men and nature, and her early FSA photographs *(pages 78-81)* were an attempt to combat them. She was most comfortable photographing her fellow Americans, although she seemed to record them most ably when their circumstances were painful. It was mainly in her later years, particularly when chance took her to the Middle and Far East, that she turned her camera on tranquil subjects *(pages 148-149),* but when she did, she extracted the very essence of what was right in the world.

W. Eugene Smith's work combines the elements of the other four photographers. Like Kertész and Cartier-Bresson he is intrigued by every facet of daily life. Like Strand he honors the strength of working people and like Miss Lange he makes documents both to expose ills and to record examples of perfection. But the special factor that marks Smith's photography is its fervent, gripping emotionalism. His pictures always contain (and arouse) powerful—sometimes violent—feelings. In a war scene, the viewer shares Smith's hatred of death and destruction; in a photograph of a doctor, his admiration; in a picture of a young animal, his love of its tenderness and vulnerability. If he could, Smith would expel pain from the life of every creature.

Despite the apparent disparities between these photographers, they are linked by their common belief that documentary photographs can help to bring out the best in people. They may have been the last generation to feel this hope; the photographers who came after them *(Chapter 5)* have chronicled the world from a less sanguine viewpoint. □

André Kertész

Quiet Day on the Polish Lines, 1915

As an infantryman in the Hungarian army, Kertész chronicled World War I. Lulls in the fighting, like the one depicted above, spoke most poignantly of the bleakness of soldiers' lives.

As a small boy in Budapest, André Kertész longed to own a camera. Finally, when he was 18, he was able to buy a small box ICA 4.5 x 6cm and with it he kept what he called an "optical diary," a portrait of his world intended for no one's eyes but his own.

This diary is simply a record of scenes—both ordinary and extraordinary—that gave character to life in Hungary in the years between 1912 and 1925. Kertész brought to it no training in photography. But perception, curiosity, a keen eye for composition and his deep affection for the people and places around him equipped Kertész to create a series of documents that are at once vivid and appealing.

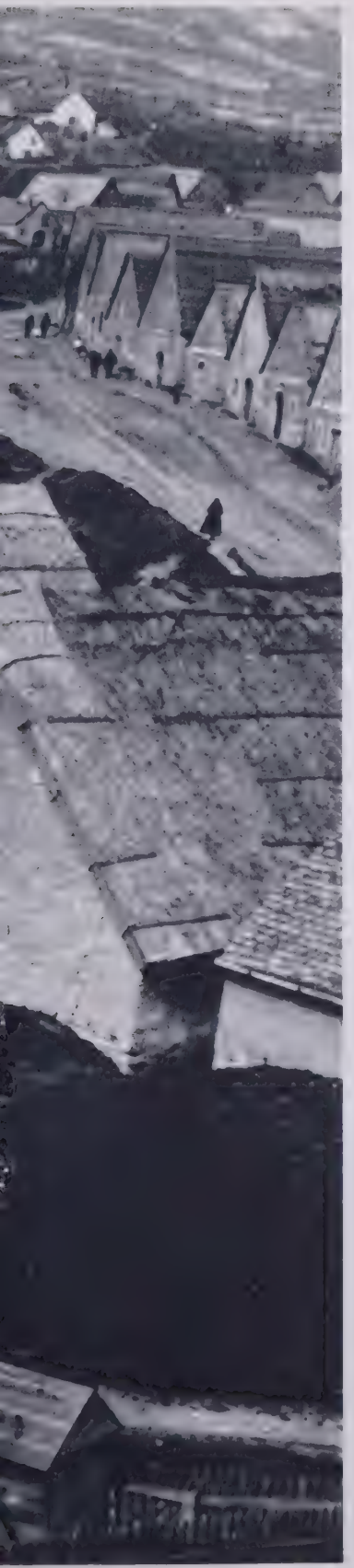
Paris Scene, 1929

Without consciously trying, he captured all the sensory elements that make a mood. In his Hungarian photographs the viewer can almost sense the dampness and earthy smell of the air, or the feel of mud rutted by wagon wheels and cobbles made slick by rain.

The basic character of Kertész's early work persisted more or less unchanged after he went to live in Paris in 1925. Places and people, whether famous artist friends or nameless passersby, were still his favorite subjects, and he portrayed them with the same affection that he had his native Hungary. One rule still guided his work—to photograph only what he loved: "If I do not have the contact, I do not touch."

For days the photographer watched this woman feeding stray cats and dogs. She was outraged when she caught him stalking her with his clumsy box camera. Changing tactics, he pursued her again for this picture only when he had a little Leica that escaped her suspicious eye.

Village near Budapest, 1919



Eugene, 1914

The bold light-and-shadow patterns (above) cast by a street lamp over an empty square at night caught Kertész's eye. But he felt the picture needed a dark figure for balance, so he enlisted his brother Eugene, who held perfectly still for the three-to-four-minute exposure. The resulting picture of a man and his shadow as he approaches the menacing darkness records the essence of night and solitude in the sleeping city of Budapest.

◄ *From atop a steep hill, the photographer studied the village of Budafok and its means of livelihood. Softly rounded expanses of turf, covering wine cellars, seem to cushion the sharp-peaked houses, while in the distance, parallel cultivated and fallow fields make stripes down a hillside.*

Heading for Esztergom, 1916

Total grayness deepens the mood of pathos recorded in this glimpse of a peasant man and his wife urging their fallen horse to its feet. The buildings of the medieval town of Esztergom appear as a faint curtain in the distance.

Peasant Woman, 1924

In this picture of a peasant woman amid a family of ducks, the photographer noted a moment of pastoral peace in the Hungarian countryside. The sun is warm and the woman, dappled in shade, smiles with an evident sense of well-being.

Sunday Afternoon, 1916

◄ *To fill his optical diary, the photographer cultivated the habit of exploring the villages around Budapest, traveling by slow train. That is how he came to record these farmers in their holiday best, relaxing and swapping stories on a Sunday afternoon as they watch their cattle drinking from a trough in the town square.*

"April—that is the fool month, isn't it?" says the photographer of this April day more than a half century ago. Spring had begun and the ground had thawed, when a blizzard flashed out of nowhere. He likens the resulting memento of the storm to an abstract painting because of the interplay of stark-white and deep-black patches.

April 13, 1913

A Woman at Gurna, Egypt, 1959

"It is one thing to photograph people," Paul Strand once wrote, "it is another to make others care about them by revealing the core of their humanness." Strand himself is one who cares. He has spent his career documenting the working people of many nations—and revealing in them the nobility that endures despite oppression.

His photographs gain their power from a simplicity as unadorned as the subjects he chooses. It is the product of slow, meticulous working methods; Strand has often been known to take months getting acquainted with a town and its inhabitants even before unpacking his gear. The gear includes large-format cameras and prisms he can attach to their lenses, allowing him to face a subject at right angles, thus going unnoticed as he works. And after his negatives are made, he often works for days on the prints. By experimenting he achieves the balance of richness and delicacy that he deems worthy of the people whose lives he records.

Tomb at Faiyum, Egypt, 1959

◄ *A nomad woman of stern beauty faces the camera with dignity, conveying by her steady gaze and serene composure the innate strength that Strand finds in human beings everywhere. Photographing such a woman was in itself an achievement, for her Muslim faith not only discourages social exchange between women and strangers but generally disapproves of posing for pictures.*

A tomb boldly painted with a symbolic mosque, which signifies that the deceased completed a pilgrimage to Mecca during his lifetime, documents an aspect of life in Upper Egypt, where people in the simplest village find esthetic expression in paying homage to their dead.

Charkieh, Delta Region, 1959

Galia Altah, Woman of the Delta, 1959

◄ *Spindly eucalyptus trees tower above a cluster of sun-dried brick houses at Charkieh, built in the same way that Egyptians have constructed their dwellings since ancient times. It was not history that attracted the photographer, but rather remnants of the past that could be revealed in the life style of present-day Egyptian villagers.*

With glistening eyes ringed in kohl—a cosmetic older than Cleopatra—a young woman wears a traditional print dress with her glass earrings and bead necklace. Although the 1952 revolution gave Egyptian women considerable freedom to follow modern styles, most peasants, or fellahin, continue to dress as they have for centuries.

Old Sailor, Brittany, France, 1950

A retired fisherman, deprived by old age and failing vision of the dignity of his work, casts a vacant gaze beyond the camera toward the harbor from which he used to sail. The photographer returned to the site two years after recording this poignant scene—and found the grizzled sailor again seated on the same seaside bench, a living monument to the lassitude of old age.

A vineyard laborer in the Cognac district of France stands up to the camera with the serene gaze that comes from pride of workmanship —seemingly unconscious of the ironic contrast between his threadbare suit and the expensive liqueur his strong hands toil to help make. ►

Vineyard Laborer, Gondeville, France, 1951

View from Lenin Hills, 1954

Henri Cartier-Bresson

Soviet regulations prohibited the taking of "panoramic views of cities." But to Cartier-Bresson, the awesome expanse of Moscow could not be documented without one. A group of students atop Lenin Hills inadvertently obliged him: during an outdoor lecture, the instructor held up an aerial photograph of the Khamovniki quarter of the city for the students to compare with the view before them—an allowable picture that the photographer instantly snapped.

Henri Cartier-Bresson may be the closest thing yet to a human camera. He sees with an eye that has, as he puts it, a built-in frame, "in slices of one-hundredth second . . . spinning films out of myself like a silkworm." His eye, hand, heart and camera are all linked into a single system, and he uses them to state a simple fact: This is how life appeared at that moment.

He believes that in every episode in life there is a time when all the elements align in a meaningful geometry, a pattern that tells all there is to tell about that episode. Sometimes the geometry lasts for only a fleeting instant; at other times, it occurs as part of a slowly shifting arrangement. In either case, Cartier-Bresson feels that it is his job as a documentary photographer to capture the scene. He must be the dispassionate observer, always ready to stop time at the precise moment when the picture is complete.

Cartier-Bresson is a tireless traveler, and his work has taken him from his native France to a dozen countries. In 1954 he went to Moscow for the first time, simply to photograph the Soviets in "every visible aspect of daily life." He spoke no Russian and had to rely on an interpreter, who often assisted by explaining the photographer's actions to skeptical bystanders. Official restrictions limited what he could record and his informal methods were a distracting novelty to his subjects. Nevertheless, he returned to Paris with photographs for a book, *The People of Moscow,* bearing the appearance of effortlessness that earmarks his work. They make the viewer part of the Cartier-Bresson system, as if one had tiptoed around Moscow with him.

At the Conservatory, 1954

◄ *Moscow's cultural institutions—theaters, museums, libraries and schools—fascinated Cartier-Bresson, as did the pleasure the Muscovites take in them. Besides photographing people as they taught, studied and performed, he sometimes came upon students and teachers just relaxing together. An afternoon at the Moscow Conservatory yielded the photograph at left, of music students chatting with virtuoso violinist David Oistrakh after a vacation.*

In the downward gaze of a truck assembly-line worker listening to a word of advice from a woman inspector, the photographer depicted a seriousness that is essential in the Soviet spirit. The scene is the ZIS factory, where trucks and luxury cars are made, and where Cartier-Bresson spent most of his time among the laborers, seeking to document the physical strength and dedication he admired in them.

At the ZIS Factory, 1954

Детская книга, Москва, 1954

The beach at Silver Forest, in a Moscow suburb, is permeated in this picture by a mood of restrained relaxation—a restraint concentrated in the instant when hard furniture, hat angles, body postures and unsmiling faces combine to convey a certain stiffness. The photographer, who is known for his pictures of the more ebullient relaxation of his fellow Frenchmen, noted that the mood here "always remains quiet and decent."

Lunch Break, 1954

In an apartment building still under construction, the lively sound of accordion music led the photographer to an unfinished flat that the construction workers—male and female—had converted into a temporary clubhouse. On its walls were the standard Soviet décor: portraits of Lenin and Stalin, an honor roll of the best workers, messages exhorting increased production. But the workers seemed to take little note of these official encouragements; their lunch hour provided time for an impromptu dance, savored by participants and onlookers alike.

Dorothea Lange

Egyptian Villagers, 1963

Until she accompanied her husband, economist Paul S. Taylor, on a trip throughout Asia in 1958 when he was a government consultant on community development, Dorothea Lange had devoted most of her career to documenting America *(pages 78-81)*. She was fearful of entering, let alone photographing, an unknown land so remote from her own. But the photographs she brought home show that the Orient did not confound her. She found in Asian faces and attitudes a reflection of some of the human qualities she had always prized the most, and these were what she documented. A child's face became a symbol of inner peace, a dancer's hand the essence of grace.

Yet when another trip abroad came up four years later, in 1962, and she prepared to go to Egypt with her husband, Miss Lange again felt the same reluctance. She wrote to a friend, "I go because Paul's work takes him there. For my own work I would choose to remain in my own country." She was ill when they departed (she died two years later of cancer), but modern, Muslim Egypt captivated her, as the world around her always had, and it raised her above her fears. The people she saw were no antiques but were active, living in the present. And she photographed them that way: not as relics from the past, but as proud bearers of ancient tradition.

Miss Lange walked through villages seeking to photograph individual people close up, but her American features and her camera made such an unfamiliar sight that villagers jostled and crowded around her. So she often took pictures of groups like this trio, recording the warm curiosity that welcomed her wherever she went.

Classroom, Egypt, 1963

Fascinated by the newness of a foreigner—and a photographer, at that—these schoolchildren erupted with delight when Miss Lange entered their classroom. Cropped hair and choirboy uniforms could not disguise their impish ebullience. Like kids anywhere, they wanted to be in on the action—and to get in the picture.

Korean Child, 1958

The expression of repose on the delicate features of a Korean child reflects a contemplative aspect of the Asian spirit. The photographer, by filling the frame with just nose, mouth and closed eyes, seems to have adopted the economy of style that is characteristic of much Oriental art.

A close-up of a tensely stretched hand says all there is to say about the exquisite grace of the Indonesian dance. The fluent gestures that are the rich symbolic vocabulary of this ancient ritual art form take years to learn. The picture reflects the discipline of this long apprenticeship.

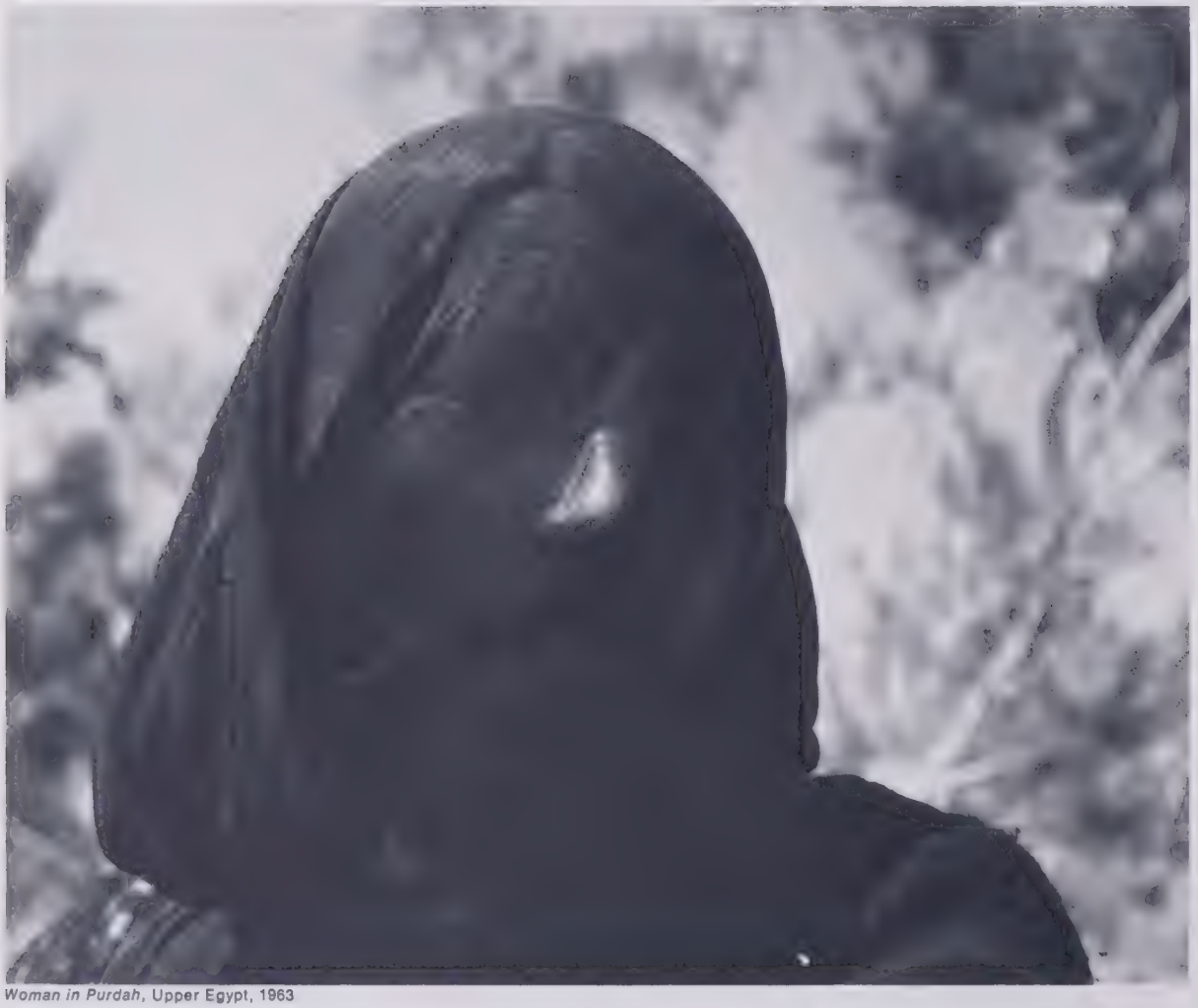
Hand, Indonesian Dancer, Java, 1958

Feet of Monk, Burma, 1958

◀ *The stance of a Buddhist monk conveys the grace that, to many Westerners, is a notable trait of Orientals. This natural elegance is shown not with a full portrait of the holy man and his face but simply with a study of his feet.*

The wiry figure of this Egyptian farmer was emphasized by outlining him against the stark, cloudless sky. His well-worn workbasket and sinewy legs help to document the hard life of the fellahin in the Nile River region.

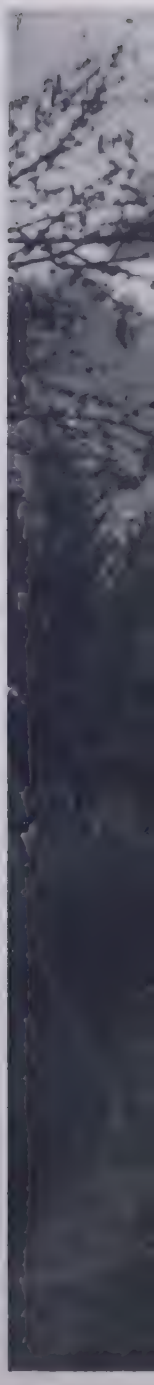
Nile Delta, Egypt, 1963



Woman in Purdah, Upper Egypt, 1963

An Egyptian woman, behind a traditional Muslim's veil, presents a shadowy, mysterious visage to the camera. Her hidden expression reflects the photographer's own quandary: Egypt was a strange land where an unknown language was spoken and unfamiliar traditions observed. The veil represents the obscurity through which the face of modern Egypt had to be perceived.

Led by a gay, dancing child, a procession of village women and children carry baskets of food to graves in honor of the dead. The ritual, which has survived 5,000 years of history, dramatizes the continuity between modern, Muslim Egypt and the enduring traditions of ancient times.



Bearing Food to the Dead, Upper Egypt, 1963

Dance of the Flaming Coke, 1956

Fawn, Africa, 1954

◄ *A steelworker gracefully coaxes flaming coal into an underground furnace, where temperatures up to 2,000° will convert it into the coke used to process iron ore. This photograph was part of an exhaustive picture story that documented every aspect of life and work in Pittsburgh.*

Smith once remarked that visitors to Albert Schweitzer's medical colony in Lambaréné were never sure "whether it is an African village, a game preserve or a medical hospital." He surmised that "it is the sum of all three," and showed that sum in his pictures. The gentle-eyed fawn was a respected member of the community as were its human citizens, including the missionary German doctor who headed it.

Twenty-five years after the close of World War II, W. Eugene Smith regards his shattering photographs of that global conflict as a failure: they did not cause war to be abolished for all time. His bitter feeling of defeat in an impossible task indicates the high goals this emotional documentarian has always set for himself. Throughout his career, Smith has poured his soul into his work, hoping to persuade those who viewed his pictures that wars and cruelty must end, that respect and tenderness are due all living creatures.

Few viewers share Smith's conviction that he failed. The depth of feeling his photographs evoke is expressed in a letter he got after the war from a Japanese who had recently seen a Smith picture: "Please kindly accept pleasure I find of photograph. I see it first time. I hold it and see it until tears are make in my eyes. It was very beautiful photograph. I sorry, which we did."

Lambaréné, 1954

On a balcony at Dr. Schweitzer's hospital in Africa, a young chimpanzee, protectively nestling a kitten, gazes trustingly at the camera. A commonplace scene, it summed up the mood at Lambaréné, where all life was cherished.

Pont Bedeau Hospital, 1958

Patients at a Haitian mental hospital languish, unclothed, in a bare shed with dirt floors. It seems that society has simply penned them up where they will be out of sight. But this revelation of their misery, once seen, cannot be dismissed.

A sailor, casualty of a raid on Kwajalein atoll in World War II, is sent to his final rest in the Pacific off the deck of the aircraft carrier Bunker Hill. With such emotion-charged pictures, Smith eloquently pleaded for an end to the evils of war. He got his photographs at great personal risk. He spent most of the war covering the fighting—and two years recuperating from a severe shell wound he received on Okinawa.

Burial at Sea, 1944

For days, the photographer followed Dr. Ernest Guy Ceriani on his rounds in Kremmling, Colorado, for the famous Country Doctor essay that appeared in LIFE. The story reaches a climax with the poignant picture at right of Dr. Ceriani, who has just stitched the forehead of a child injured by a kick from a horse. Weary and deep in thought, he is searching for a way of telling her parents that she probably will lose the sight of one eye. An amputation, a birth and a death were part of the doctor's day; his selflessness is captured in every picture of the essay.

Country Doctor, 1948

A tiny kitten, barely able to open its eyes, mews in protest against the confinement of the hands that hold it. The kitten, called Mieko, was photographer Smith's; his household is never without cats, and he always gives them Japanese names. To him, this small squirming creature represented the most positive, joyful thing there is: a new life, bursting with promise.

Mieko, date unknown

Critics of Complacency 5

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"I got into the Democratic Convention by stealing a badge from a jacket hanging in the men's room," the photographer confesses. "I liked Adlai Stevenson that year—but I was much more impressed by the spectacle than by who they would nominate." Here Frank shows a fragment of the spectacle, an intense discussion between members of the New York delegation. Caught up in argument, they are too absorbed in the politics of the moment to be aware of the camera. ▶

ROBERT FRANK: *Convention Hall, Chicago,* 1956

Uncovering the Wasteland of Affluence

In a landmark book on economics in 1958, Harvard professor John Kenneth Galbraith reported on a radical change in income among Americans. In the wartime and postwar decade ending in 1950, the poorest fifth of United States families had increased their real income by 42 per cent. The income of the next-to-bottom fifth had grown by 37 per cent. Families in the middle fifth of the population were making 24 per cent more money. Some of the gains, but not many, had been won at the expense of those at the top of the heap of American society. Except for pockets of "insular poverty" in areas like Appalachia and among minorities, said Galbraith's *The Affluent Society,* Americans in general had become—without anybody realizing it—well off.

This revolution on the economic landscape doubtless helped to account for a revolutionary change in the viewpoint of photographers documenting the country's social landscape. From the time of Jacob Riis, concerned photographers had used their cameras as trumpets to sound a call for action against society's ills. Their pictures, realistically grimy, had first rallied the public to war on poverty and all its ugly consequences—slums, child labor, sharecropping, sweatshops. Later photographers had an even more ambitious goal: to combat through their pictures deficiencies in the ethical as well as the physical condition of mankind, not only in the United States but all over the world. In the view of John Szarkowski, director of photography at The Museum of Modern Art, all these documentarians aimed "to show what was wrong with the world and to persuade their fellows to take action to make it right." But by the 1950s a different attitude began to appear among documentary photographers: they looked at the fabric of the affluent society and although they found it full of holes they concluded that it was not up to them to mend it.

The Swiss-born Robert Frank, along with Lee Friedlander, Garry Winogrand and Diane Arbus, led this new generation of photographers that felt bound by no mission whatever except to see life clearly; they set out not to reform the world but merely to know and reflect it. Winogrand could have been speaking for the entire group when he said, "I don't have messages in my pictures. . . . The true business of photography is to capture a bit of reality (whatever that is) on film."

Explaining these people's refusal to act as reformers, critic Alan Trachtenberg wrote in *The Nation:* "These young photographers propose, with very rapid cameras, to present a view from within. There is no effort to judge but instead to express. The snapshot or the passing glimpse seems the appropriate vehicle for a society which has lost a sense of whole relationships. Many of the glimpses . . . show man-made but uninhabited landscapes; emptiness conveys the leading feeling of social desolation. The anatomy is exposed cold-heartedly. Apathy, loneliness, anomie are not simply reflected

but ingrained in the chrome and Formica and plate glass surfaces which carry their distortions to the eye . . . mordant celebrations of a plastic environment. Glutted with artifacts, with artificialities, this social landscape suffocates. The word 'social' itself becomes a bitter joke. Many of these pictures leave the feelings paralyzed, gripped in fear and mystification."

Along with intent, technique also changed. Though Diane Arbus worked slowly and deliberately, Frank, Winogrand and Friedlander are all fast shooters, snapping away without premeditation. It is not that they do not think as they work; rather they have speeded up their thought processes to make the act reflexive, shooting what they see before the conscious mind has time to analyze or rearrange it.

The pictures in this chapter—from Robert Frank's cynical look at some politicians on the previous page to Diane Arbus' peek into a living room all ready for Christmas *(page 203)*—simply argue that in the affluent society something is awry. If they have a hint of a prescription for curing social ills, it is no more than the straightforward notion that the solution to any problem begins with seeing it clearly. Such a coldly clear look is often disturbing, telling us things about ourselves we would rather not know, and these pictures are more likely to be provocative than pleasurable.

In defense of this kind of work Frank has said: "I have been frequently accused of deliberately twisting subject-matter to my point of view. Above all, I know that life for a photographer cannot be a matter of indifference. Opinion often consists of a kind of criticism. But criticism can come out of love. It is important to see what is invisible to others—perhaps the look of hope or the look of sadness. Also, it is always the instantaneous reaction to *oneself* that produces a photograph." □

Robert Frank

Robert Frank flared across the horizon of photography like a comet. He became something of a celebrity in 1959, and by 1962 had stopped making still pictures. But behind him he left what is generally regarded as the best single volume of contemporary United States documentary photography; his pictures still astonish his peers.

Frank turned to serious photography in Switzerland at the age of 18, and when he immigrated to America five years later he had already won some recognition for his work, which was basically European and sentimental. In the United States he did a stint of fashion work at *Harper's Bazaar,* and then in 1955 became the first European to win a Guggenheim Fellowship in photography. He promptly bought a secondhand Ford and set out to document his adopted nation.

After 10,000 miles of travel, Frank assembled 83 of his pictures in a book he called *The Americans*—and could find no publisher. "It was scrofulous stuff," says John Szarkowski of The Museum of Modern Art, "those lunch counters, those bus depots and those plastic booths and those nickelodeons! The book challenged the way Americans were supposed to look. . . . It was about whole segments of life that nobody had thought the proper concern of art."

Frank's pictures documented Americans as a remote, separated and alienated mass of human beings staring past each other. Frank was called a Communist—"a deliberate distortion," he says, "but you know how it was in the Fifties." He explains his dour documents by saying: "I had never traveled through the country. I saw something that was hidden and threatening. It is important to see what is invisible to others. You felt no tenderness."

Walker Evans was one of the few Americans to recognize the value of Frank's book. "It is a far cry from all the woolly, successful 'photo-sentiments' about human familyhood," he wrote. *The Americans* was finally published in 1958, not in the United States, however, but in Paris. "Only because the Paris publisher was a friend of mine," says Frank. A quantity of French-language copies was sold in the United States but that edition was soon remaindered.

Yet the word slowly spread, and the book, out of print, became much sought after. In 1959, Grove Press issued the first United States edition; in 1969, Grossman Press reissued it. Noting this 10th anniversary, *Creative Camera* of London said it "must be the most famous photoessay ever produced."

But by then Frank had finished with still photography. In 1961 or 1962, he thinks, he lost his Leica—and didn't mind at all. "Unless one becomes a commercial artist or a fashion photographer, making a living is almost impossible," he says. Today he makes his livelihood by teaching cinematography, some of which he does himself on a noncommercial basis. But as for the documentary photograph, he explains, "I had done it. I had made a book without interference. At best, to go on would have been a repetition."

Trolley, New Orleans, 1955

"A streetcar goes by on a main street, maybe Bourbon Street, in New Orleans," Frank remembers, "and there are people looking out at something. I wasn't thinking about segregation when I shot it. But I did feel that the black people [in the back of the bus] were more dignified."

Parade, Hoboken, 1955

In 1955, when Hoboken, New Jersey, celebrated its 100th anniversary, Frank happened to be there visiting a friend. "This is a picture of two people who were standing behind one of the flags, behind glass and in shadows. They're sort of hiding." To the photographer, it is "a threatening picture."

City Fathers, Hoboken, 1955

The day of the Hoboken centennial was cold, but most local political leaders, watching the end of the parade from a wooden reviewing stand, turned out in formal finery despite the weather. It was no accident, wrote photographer Walker Evans, "that Frank snapped just as those politicians in high silk hats were exuding the utmost fatuity. . . . Such strikes are not purely fortuitous. They happen consistently for expert practitioners."

St. Francis, Gas Station and City Hall, Los Angeles, 1956

With cross held aloft, a statue of St. Francis seems almost defiantly to confront the Los Angeles City Hall. "What moved me," Frank says, "was that, against the background of that hideous city hall, there was the little vase with a flower. The combination of that city hall, that big gray block of cement and those recurring images of gas stations and the flower. . . ."

Charleston, South Carolina, 1955

"It was the first time I was in the South," the photographer remembers, "and the first time I really saw segregation. I found it extraordinary that whites would give their children to black women when they wouldn't allow the women to sit by them in the drugstore. I did very few pictures that made a political point like this."

Picnickers on Belle Isle, Detroit, 1955

"It is quite a strange, sad photo," says the photographer about this riverfront scene. "They are pointless people—totally unimportant, unglamorous, unnoticed." The subjects are presumably out for a good time in an island park, but they do not even seem to notice one another.

Elevator, Miami Beach, 1956

An elevator is a small and intimate enclosure, yet the people who ride it are generally anything but intimate. In this impersonal record of an elevator ride the operator, looking rather forlorn, seems not so much human as a part of the machinery. But where Frank kept "turning away after the click of the shutter" when making most of the pictures for his book, The Americans, something about this girl made him linger awhile and talk to her.

Fourth of July, Jay, New York, 1955

Here is the Fourth of July pretty much as it is supposed to be: the Stars and Stripes bigger than life, floating over a busy scene of people walking about, children on the move, a whole community buzzing. But nobody is smiling, and the flag is patched. Behind the activity and decorations there is an emptiness of spirit.

In the isolation of the Arizona desert, bypassed by the mainstream of American life, these Indians from a Navajo reservation see and hear the transcontinental traffic that roars past them on Route 66—but rarely get more than a glimpse of the people in the speeding cars. Now sudden death on the highway has changed all that, depositing two of these remote people at their feet. Stolidly contemplating the two blanketed corpses from another world, the Indians are still as distant from that world as ever. ►

Accident on U.S. 66, Arizona, 1956

Ranch Market, Hollywood, 1956

◄ *The countergirl under the Christmas decoration has walled herself off from Christmas and from the world. A young woman in a lively setting, face to face with hungry people, she has hardened her eyes and frozen her pleasant features into a mask that sets her apart—and makes the picture a chilling record of one soul lost among many.*

The girl in the foreground is a starlet come to a movie première, to be seen by the crowd. She is at a high point in her career, surrounded by fans yet a million miles away. Somehow she manages to look at once impregnable and defenseless.

Movie Première, Hollywood, 1956

Lee Friedlander

Lee Friedlander's pictures show a distraught and frantic America. A busy street alongside a gas station seems fractionated, its bits and pieces separated and stirred up—hurrying cars, rearview mirror, overhead lights, parts of people. A photograph of a quiet wedding party is disturbed and distorted by a passing automobile; a Manhattan singles bar is cold and grim, a place to size up the lonely.

There is a brooding message of disorientation, of something having gone askew in these pictures. Yet Friedlander, whose camera sees this, is puzzled when anyone suggests that he has documented a sense of 20th Century unease. A rather boyish man born in 1934, friendly and unpretentious, he shrugs his shoulders and says he just likes to take pictures; whatever the viewer sees in them is his own business. "It fascinates me that there is a variety of feeling about what I do. I'm not a premeditative photographer," he says. "I see a picture and I make it. If I had a chance, I'd be out shooting all the time. You don't have to go looking for pictures. The material is generous. You go out and the pictures are staring at you." Often they stare at him through car windows, for many of his photographs are scenes he spots as he drives on a trip or simply while doing errands near home.

Friedlander literally walked into photography one day in his native Aberdeen, Washington. His father had sent him to a portrait studio to pick up some proofs; when no one answered his ring, he recalls, "I walked through the curtain and there was this old man putting paper into dark water. He didn't see me. As he put the paper in, people's faces came out. It was the greatest trick." At 12, Friedlander got his first camera, an old folding model; and at 16, with high school finished, he went off to a Los Angeles photography school. By 1956 he was in New York doing record-album covers and other commercial work. A friend showed him books of photographs by the great documentarians Eugène Atget *(pages 36-42)* and Walker Evans *(pages 67-71)*. "Wow, it knocked me out," he says. "It was a revelation. Seeing Evans' and Atget's work and meeting Evans was a breakthrough for me. From that time on that's the tradition I worked in."

Friedlander makes his living with commercial work, but in his characteristically easy-going way he melds it into his more personal photography. "Commercial work takes me, like teaching, to where I can do my own work. Wherever I work commercially it is not going to take me where I don't want to be; it won't take me into a vacuum."

Friedlander talks casually and openly about his craft, but in his pictures the smiling easiness vanishes. Here is a world that is cold, angular, bleak and dry of spirit. "Little poems of hate . . . bitterly funny observations," wrote his mentor Walker Evans of one collection of his pictures. "An atmosphere of disquieting fatality," says another critic. Even Friedlander's representations of people in physical contact with each other *(pages 187-188)* are hard, tough and stubbornly unromantic. Despite his disclaimers of intent, his work reveals a photographer who is intellectually perceptive, a man with a strong view of the world that emerges intuitively, like a reflex, in the 1/100 second that it takes to snap the scene.

Hillcrest, New York, 1970

One winter day the photographer stopped his pickup truck for gasoline about five miles from New City in Rockland County, New York, where he lives. "It's a nothing, a couple of gas stations, a shopping plaza, not many people, lots of cars. I looked out and this is what I saw." What he saw he caught in his camera: a crazy-quilt pattern of cars, signs and suburban clutter.

Monterey, California, 1970

Friedlander, his wife and two children stopped in this California town early one morning on a vacation trip. "I always walk around and look around when we hit some town or city," he says. He spied a window with some pictures in it; the bottom one was of Marilyn Monroe. He took a photograph that shows his lone shadow looming ominously over the ambiguous window.

This is a strange photo, the photographer says, "strange that it came out at all." He was driving by a village green when he noticed a group of people assembling to have a picture taken. It was a wedding party. Friedlander parked his car, rolled down the front window and started to take a photograph—when another car flashed past, imparting a startling sense of sudden, dramatic interruption to the easy ambiance of the wedding. ►

Princeton, New Jersey, 1969

Seattle, Washington, 1970

After a summer trip to Washington State, the Friedlander family headed south to Los Angeles where Lee was going to teach photography at the University of California. Before leaving they put up at a Seattle hotel. Early in the morning father and son went into the street for a walk. In the post-dawn light the boy stood on the street (left) looking at himself in a window. His father's picture, using the mirror image of himself, his son and the nearly empty street, catches visually the hush of a city before the morning rush.

Somewhere In Mid-America, 1969

Told that this city scene appears desolate, the photographer said: "I didn't make the place. I take pictures where there are lots of people, too. I am always taking pictures of city landscapes." The air of mystery is enhanced by a glimpse of a soldier—part of a World War I memorial—peering out from the top of the shrubbery at right.

Madison, Wisconsin, 1966

Friedlander believes that studio photographers' windows tell a lot about a neighborhood. When he looked at this window and saw his shadow on a portrait he chuckled and snapped it. The result memorializes a typical neighborhood portrait studio—with the added intrusion of the visitor's shadow. The picture is in a volume by Friedlander called Self Portrait, containing 42 pictures, each marked by his presence on the scene.

Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1966

The photographer was taking a picture of his wife when something startled her. "The kids were young then," he says, explaining her expression to any parent; "maybe she was looking at them." Mrs. Friedlander's taut face contrasts with the joviality of the men in the blown-up picture in the window behind her: in back, the self-conscious smiles of men posing; in front, the unposed look of a mother concerned about her children.

New York City, 1967

◄*"This was made at a party following an old friend's wedding," the photographer explains (the friend was fellow photographer Garry Winogrand —pages 190-201). "It was a small party at his apartment and it lasted a couple of hours. I don't know who the man is who was lying down." But however unintentionally, Friedlander and his temporarily faceless subject document the tired frivolity into which parties often lapse.*

"I went to a party with Ron Kitaj, the painter," says Friedlander. "He was teaching classes at the University of California at Los Angeles at the same time I was. He was a much more social guy, and I asked if he could take me to any parties I could photograph. I think the party was for the young man in the picture; I don't really know. I didn't know anybody there except Ron." Yet the photographer again recorded, through his nameless companions of the moment, the special quality of one kind of social gathering.

Los Angeles, 1970

New York City, 1968

Commissioned by a magazine to do a series of photographs on Manhattan's singles bars, where unattached people may become attached, Friedlander went to four or five a night to get this picture. He moved in on one packed crowd, revealing in his close-up view the appraising eyes behind the convivial, seemingly open-handed gestures typical of these meeting places.

Glendale, California, 1970

While Friedlander was teaching at UCLA, he was invited to a wedding by a friend of the groom. "I took this picture while the wedding was going on," he says. "The people looked serious and thoughtful." In the split second recorded here, shooting over the shoulder of a spectator, he caught the solemnity that attends even an informal, highly casual California wedding.

Garry Winogrand

Garry Winogrand claims to deal in the banal and the commonplace. "I am a tourist," he says, and indeed, his photographs show ordinary people doing ordinary things. Yet somehow an unsettling element of strangeness appears. Many of his pictures document paradoxical groupings, momentary encounters between people *(right),* animals in unusual contexts—scenes that force the viewer to think twice about what kind of reality they show him.

Winogrand came to his unconventional style by a fairly conventional route. A native of New York City, he bought his first camera when he was a weather forecaster in the Army Air Forces of World War II, and afterward studied painting at New York's City College and Columbia University on the GI Bill. He turned permanently to photographing because "there wasn't a lot of torturous work with the brush." He quickly became a craftsman well able to achieve the results asked by clients, and made for himself a successful career as a commercial photographer. But his private work turned to ordinary events and ordinary people.

These he records incessantly, his Leica clicking constantly—"the fastest gun in the East," as a contemporary remarks. "No one moment is most important," says Winogrand. "Any moment can be something." But he is very selective in the prints he makes from his rolls so that what the viewer gets to see is not a random moment of life but a view of humanity as Winogrand sees it. The pictures emerge taut, full of little twists and confrontations, telling brief stories, often mysterious: a mother, babe in arms and hair in curlers, watching a spit-and-polish military review; a walrus performing incongruously in a setting framed by apartment buildings; one dog leading another by a leash.

For such thought-provoking views of a world made up of dramas, confrontations and jokes, big and little, Winogrand adamantly refuses to supply any interpretations of his own. "The photo is a thing in itself," he says. "And that's what still photography is all about."

New York World's Fair, 1964

On a sunny afternoon at the New York World's Fair, eight people rest on a bench: a white girl talking to a young black; next to them a closely linked trio of girls; then a pair of girls looking with great interest at something outside the picture; finally an older man, oblivious to them all, reading his paper. The photographer is an observer unobserved, noting the cryptic unfinished stories that make up the reality of life.

Hollywood Boulevard, Los Angeles, 1969

Here is a typical Winogrand encounter—existing not in the minds of its participants, but in the eye of the photographer and his camera. Its poignancy, as in the picture above, comes from the deep gulf that lies between the close-together people: in this case a helpless cripple shadowed in his wheelchair and the three pretty, very lively girls passing by in the bright sunlight.

Dallas, Texas, 1964

On a busy street corner during an American Legion convention, a legless man crawls across the pavement, begging alms. All around him are healthy, prosperous Legionnaires. They are aware of his presence, and they give him room, yet everyone carefully ignores him. The picture raises disturbing questions (did he and they share the same war?), and in leaving them unanswered it exposes some of the connections and separations that tangle the threads of American society.

Bronx Zoo, New York, 1959

All this picture documents is the members of two species cautiously investigating each other—a boy with a handful of peanuts and a look of wonder, and an elephant with an appetite. But when it turned up on a contact sheet, the photograph fascinated the photographer. He took to frequenting zoos, and in the encounters he witnessed there he found striking revelations, like this one, of the funny and puzzling relationships among the creatures of the world.

Aquarium at Coney Island, 1963

An odd association between man and beast sets up a show within a show for the documentary camera. Spectators have crowded a gallery to watch a walrus perform, but the walrus has wandered offstage to look closely and quizzically at a keeper who is taking its picture; it seems almost to be confronting the keeper with a complaint: "Why are you stealing my act?"

Texas State Fair, 1964

A heroic, Texas-sized figure of a John Wayne-type cowboy dwarfs human visitors to the annual state fair in Dallas—and seems to cow them too.

At the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, two contradictory themes in American life collide. Informality, in the person of a mother in hair curlers and hair net, comes up against the embodiment of formality: cadets in ranks with rifles just so, arrayed on a manicured drill field that is framed by exactly placed buildings. ►

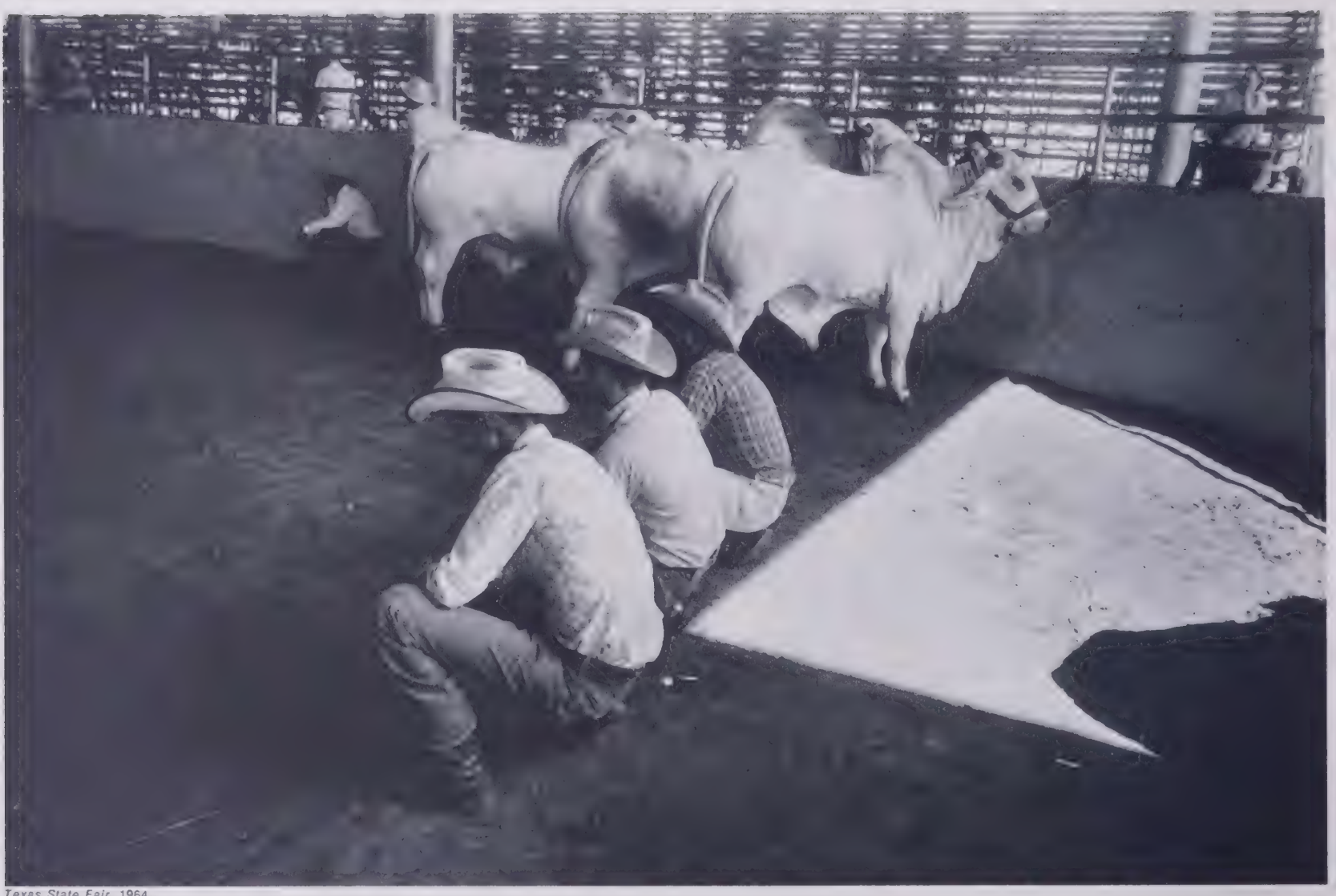
Dressed Up for the Parade, Air Force Academy, Colorado, 1964

Zoo, New York, 1962

Many of Winogrand's pictures involve unusual confrontations—often, but not always, between people. This one depicts a three-way face-off between humans and animals at the Bronx Zoo, with all three couples apparently equally intrigued by what goes on before their eyes.

The Pet, 1962

The matter of relationships, which lies at the core of so many Winogrand photographs, takes on a different and humorous twist here as applied to two dogs, one of which is inexplicably but calmly leading the other by a leash.



Texas State Fair, 1964

Roaming behind the scenes at a livestock show, the photographer caught two trios juxtaposed as though in a ballet. Three cowboys hunker in a row while beyond them three Brahma bulls stand upright, also in a row. Both groups manage to ignore each other—and the picture comes off as a satirical study in noncommunication

Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1958

A child stands in blazing sunlight, limned against the black void of a garage just off Route 66 in New Mexico. This black-and-white contrast is repeated by the ominous dark cloud looming out of the Sandia Mountains; the tiny human figure seems to set life against the blackness of death.

Diane Arbus

In 1962 the late Diane Arbus, a 39-year-old New Yorker, applied to the Guggenheim Foundation for a fellowship in photography. She was no run-of-the-mill applicant: born to wealth in a department-store family, she grew up on Park Avenue, had a governess, was privately educated, married at 18, and afterward was an assistant to her husband, a fashion photographer. Neither was she a neophyte: her words and pictures, including portraits of people in the news, had appeared in *Harper's Bazaar* and other magazines. Now she wanted to strike out for herself in work of a more serious nature.

"I want," she wrote the Guggenheim committee, "to photograph the considerable ceremonies of our present." In that category of subject matter she included anything that went on in "Ceremonial Places" (the beauty parlor, the funeral parlor, even people's parlors), as well as "Ceremonies of Competition" (contests and sports events) and "Ceremonies of Celebration" (conventions and pageants).

The Guggenheim committee agreed. Diane Arbus, armed with camera and battery-powered strobe light, set out to document the commonplace, the taken-for-granted and the bypassed deviates or freaks of nature. To this human material, involved with ceremonies few thought ceremonial, she brought a wise child's eyes, a gentle manner and a steely persistence. Some of the remarkable pictures she took in the ensuing years appear on these pages. Time after time, the familiar looks unexpected and freakish when seen through her scathing eye, and the freakish looks unexpectedly familiar.

A short four years after getting the Guggenheim Fellowship—and a second one in 1966—she was an acknowledged artistic success, sharing a major show at New York's Museum of Modern Art with Lee Friedlander and Garry Winogrand *(preceding pages)*.

She usually worked in the manner of an old-fashioned portrait photographer, talking with her subjects earnestly and sympathetically, making pictures that were collaborations between the subjects and herself. For her camera no person was too ordinary—or too repugnant—to record. She painstakingly tracked down any subject that interested her—transvestites, suburbanites, dwarfs, prizewinners, twins, even nudists—working hard to document those aspects of mankind that most people overlook or look away from.

An immobile image of the lifeless quality of ► mechanically celebrated holidays, this acid photograph was taken at a suburban housing development on Long Island. The expensive furnishings and plentiful presents indicate the prosperity of the inhabitants, but the antiseptic arrangement suggests a spiritual coldness at odds with the open-hearted love and honor Christmas gifts should represent. For all the neatness of the room, the clocks do not agree.

Levittown, 1962

Veiled Woman, 1968

A low-angled close-up, harshly lit with a flash, this street shot shows the influence of news photography, which Diane Arbus greatly admired because she felt it was so factual. In her hands the journalistic technique achieved an honesty many levels higher than most news photographs attain, for the "reality" it discloses appears—as in this picture—to be put on, a mask for some deeper truth. "A photograph is a secret about a secret," she once wrote about such pictures. "The more it tells you the less you know."

An elegant coiffure and costume and a setting elaborately furnished with exotic objets d'art only accentuate the feeling that here something is awry. The appearance of a confident and well-ordered world is contradicted by the clutter at lower left—a contradiction reinforced by the subject's uneasy pose and strained expression.

At Home, 1965

Senior Citizens, 1970

The 79-year-old king and 72-year-old queen of a Seniorella Ball had never met before; their names had been picked out of a hat at a gathering of elderly people in New York City. They face the camera with a grimness that belies the festive nature of the affair they reign over.

Bedecked with symbols of superpatriotism, a young man waits to take his place in a win-the-war-in-Vietnam parade in Manhattan. His expression and his trappings are so very ordinary the viewer senses that he—and the celebration he is about to join—are not ordinary at all but manifestations of most unusual times.

Parader, 1967

On the Dance Floor, 1968

This picture of a mismatched couple at a formal dance is another of Diane Arbus' documents of "ceremonies of our present." All uncover joylessness in what should be happy activities; here a man, peering over the shoulder of a partner half a head taller than he is, seems to be dancing not because he wants to but because it is a social duty. The question the photograph asks is, why in the world should it be required?

Two youngsters have the ballroom floor to themselves after disposing of all competition to win a dance contest and the trophies at their feet. It is an occasion that seems to call for congratulations. But the children's expressions, smug beyond their years, make this picture a savage comment on a world that encourages childish mimicry of adult sophistication.

Junior Interstate Ballroom Dance Champions, Yonkers, New York, 1962

Twins, 1966

Cathleen (left) and Colleen were posed against a neutral background and placed within the frame so simply that the photograph resembles a snapshot. This casual treatment of what most people consider quite unusual—identical twins—was characteristic of the photographer's work: portraying the extraordinary as something perfectly ordinary and acceptable.

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CHRISTIAN SUNDE: *My Family on Avenue T, Brooklyn,* 1969

Recording the Private World

The generation of documentary photographers who matured in the 1960s had to find a new direction if they were to take their places alongside the masters of documentary photography who had preceded them. It seemed that man in society had now been looked at in every meaningful and unusual way. To be sure, there would always be new elements to document in the vastness and diversity of mankind, but those who had gone before—from Hine and Riis, campaigning for reform, to Friedlander and Arbus, commenting dispassionately—had been too comprehensive, all too penetrating, in their work. What could be left for the younger documentarians?

There was, really, only one way open. The young photographers turned their lenses away from the tumultuous world about them and attempted to find elemental truths in themselves and their own private moments. They documented their personal experiences, events that were judged not in relationship to life around them, but only in their effect on the photographer himself. This subjective approach was not totally new; Lartigue in particular had concentrated on his family and friends. But few in the field had consciously chosen to delve so deeply into themselves or been so ruthlessly honest and unflinching about displaying their private lives and emotions in public in their effort to communicate some aspect of reality to their audience. The photographers of the '60s adopted a confessional style, in which the camera served as therapist. The pictures often deliver insights—not only on subjects and photographers but on life itself—that verbal communication could never achieve. These photographers have to be bold in a special way; they do not blink at the moment when the frank picture has to be made; they do not turn away during episodes of psychological torment. Whether the subject is an innocent family portrait, such as the one on the preceding page by Christian Sunde, pictures brought back by the obsessive traveler Tom Zimmerman, or the relentless recording of the trials and hazards of lovers by Arthur Freed, these documentarians rely doggedly on personal experiences and observations as their source material.

Since they are not concerned directly with the historical surge and flow of our times, their pictures catch the piquant facets of existence—the ambiance of a place, the terror or joy of a given moment, the anger and tenderness that fill an everyday life. These are shifting moods, the common occurrences that most photographers—and people—tend to overlook. Yet these men, true to the traditions of documentary photography, find in the commonplace the large lessons of beauty and truth. By studying the apparently banal with their cameras they illuminate the world.

The concern of these photographers with emotional content makes esthetics seem almost unimportant. But their emphasis on visceral reaction gives their work a distinctive quality. The pictures appear random, more than

snapshots, less than conventionally accepted photographic art. They stand as documents of a state of mind. As such, they are often as difficult to make as they are to comprehend. A young father passing by his teen-age stepdaughter's room sees her in a warm embrace with her boyfriend. He is brought to a halt, his feelings mixed. But he takes the picture *(page 219),* a sensitive view of young people who are rapidly passing beyond the innocent games of puppy love. A disturbing scene for a father to witness, a difficult one to shoot, yet a truthful documentary picture.

Equally disquieting, these practitioners regularly find in their work more uncomplimentary insights into themselves than they wish they did. Arthur Freed, involved in a cross-country love story, unveiled the range of his feelings, from boyish compassion to open anger and aggressiveness. The trip caused some emotional hardships for both people involved, and they were recorded by Freed, his documents bearing testimony to the struggle humans must endure to achieve a balanced and meaningful relationship.

The three photographers whose work is displayed in this chapter are longtime friends, sharing photographic goals and difficulties. All three have worked at their art for years, building reputations but receiving little economic reward. Their private photographic visions are not made for, or aimed at, a mass audience. They have survived economically by taking an array of odd jobs, usually teaching photography or working in studios. Their concern for the revelation of the self on film drives them on. Their cameras are always ready wherever they are, whatever they are doing. They constantly watch for the time to press the shutter, to capture the scene that will provide more visual evidence of their special worlds. □

Christian Sunde

Christian Sunde once thought of his principal subjects—his wife and children—as obstacles to his development as a professional photographer. While he struggled to master the medium—he did not take up photography until he was 25 years old—the responsibility he felt for supporting his family made them seem a hindrance. But then he came under the influence of Tom Zimmerman *(pages 224-229),* who taught him to examine the personal in order to discover the universal. So Sunde trained his camera on his own family to capture their nuances of mood, personality and physical appearance. Through these studies he learned a great deal about his subjects, about himself—and about humanity. And such photographs, he feels, give him an important method of communicating with people and understanding them.

Sunde was born and raised in Brooklyn and did not leave the city until recently, long after he had committed himself to photography. He changed his way of life drastically, moving to northern Maine, there to build a house, grow his own vegetables and earn a subsistence wage however he could —currently by teaching English at a local public school. Even in the backwoods he continues to chart with his camera the innocence, the beauty and the frailties of those close to him.

Showing signs of fatigue after the climb up a 2,000-foot rise in front of Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Sunde's wife stands amid the rugged beauties of Montana. With her hair in a practical shingle cut, her simple, functional clothes and her weathered complexion, she looks thoughtful and relaxed, a down-to-earth woman who blends in with the elemental nature of the countryside.

Denise, Christian, Glenn and Luke, 1970

The way people can quickly become lost in their private reveries—even when crowded together—is shown in this picture of the children in Sunde's life: in the back of the family car, each looks his separate way. Denise, the photographer's teenage stepdaughter, is at left, her gaze pensive. Christian, Sunde's son by his first marriage, sits in the rear looking at his fingers while Glenn, at right, lolls back dreamily. Little Luke, in the middle, has his attention caught by something outside.

Liz and Denise at the Beach, 1968

In playful embrace Liz and her 14-year-old daughter Denise display their affection during an outing at a beach near New York City. The closeness in age of mother and daughter—Liz was only 18 years old when Denise was born—and their resemblance to each other make them appear to be sisters. This creates a charming but complex confusion of personal relationships whose difficulties are suggested here.

Denise and Boyfriend, 1968

Sunde was walking down the hall past the room of Denise, his stepdaughter, when he saw her sharing a tender moment with her boyfriend. Her hand rests idly on her face as she gazes up through hooded eyes at the young man—two adolescents learning the sensations of love. The picture has always bothered Sunde—but he made it deliberately, and considers it one of his best.

Denise at Gardner's Lake, 1968

At a secluded spot in Maine where the family often bathes in the nude, Denise giggles shyly before the camera, her 14-year-old body draped only with a towel. Her averted face and the upward turn of her left hand detail her modesty, while the clothes at right indicate her nudity. The subject, composition and play of sunlight on the leaves interact to transform the picture into a charming, intimate view of a young girl.

Liz and Luke, 1969

Fresh from a bath with Luke when he was still a baby, Liz, her long hair wet, is lost in a loving moment with her son and her husband as he takes their picture. Her features relaxed and softened by the bath, her hands folded elegantly across the baby, the affection in her eyes, the boy's contentment and even the drawing by one of the children, mounted and hanging on the wall behind them, speak movingly of familial harmony.

Nude Liz and Luke, 1970

Liz lounges on the bed like a classical nude, smooth and sculpted, as she plays a game with Luke. While the graceful mother resembles statuary from antiquity, the active baby injects a note of high spirits as he crawls in exuberant innocence. Scenes like this are commonly found in the work of today's documentarians as they seek both beauty and significance in the ordinary.

Liz at Bailey's Mistake, 1970

In a moment of anxiety, Liz huddles in a chair at a summer house at Bailey's Mistake, a harbor in northeastern Maine. Sunde had just entered the room when he saw his wife curled up, her hand to her mouth, her face shadowed by tears. He took the picture, a revealing and touching document of the sudden pangs of anguish, little and big, to which human beings are constantly prey.

Kansas Truck Stop, 1969

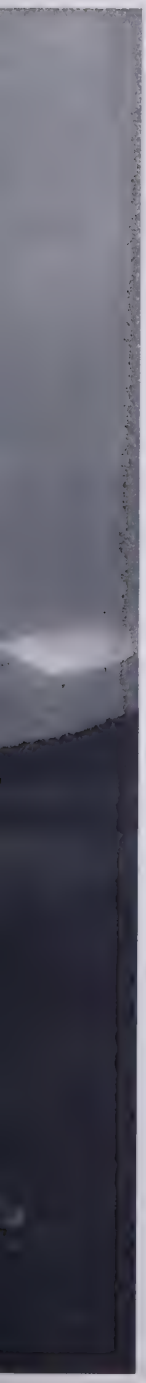
Tom Zimmerman

Tom Zimmerman is the documentarian of the road. Unlike most people on vacation trips who take pictures only when they reach the Grand Canyon or some other scenic destination, Zimmerman does not wait—he records all sorts of scenes along the way. He finds more documentary value in a picture of a truck parked off a highway leading to Chicago *(left)* than in a standard panoramic shot of that busy metropolis itself. The hypnotic effect of an empty highway *(page 226),* the sense of being on a long car trip *(page 227),* the fleeting glimpse of a passing town in a distant locale *(pages 228-229)* are the personal visual dispatches Zimmerman brings back from his wanderings.

An inveterate traveler, Zimmerman spends much of his life on the road. He crisscrosses the nation and dips down into Mexico, settling in one place only long enough to make money to finance his next trip. He sells an occasional photograph, teaches photography at such places as San Francisco's Art Institute, has worked as a photographic assistant and plays the tenor saxophone in a jazz combo. A shy, friendly man with flowing hair and a huge mustache, Zimmerman is a high-school dropout. His fascination with the road and the things he sees along the way are transformed into the documentation of a perpetual trip.

A tractor-trailer, its diesel idling in the snowy night, stands unattended at a truck stop along Interstate 35 in Kansas while the driver refuels himself at the nearby restaurant. The photographer took this picture, while driving his automobile from Mexico to Chicago, to show his feeling that the huge, modern trucks exert a dominating influence on the American highways.

Colima, Mexico, 1967



Pennsylvania Highway, 1966

The feeling of being on a long motor trip is generated in the picture above, taken as the Florida-bound photographer drove along a Pennsylvania highway on a rainy afternoon. The water-streaked windshield through which he shot contributes the kind of hazy distortion that comes with long hours behind the wheel. The car becomes a world of its own; hints of the world outside—the anonymous car that is being overtaken, the gathering darkness, the approaching headlights —re-create the incongruous mix of monotony and anticipation that characterizes lengthy drives.

◄ *Heading west toward the beaches of the Pacific Ocean, Zimmerman stopped to make this picture in Colima, Mexico. A long, hot, empty ribbon of asphalt unrolls before the car, its ending lost in the mass of mountains rising in the background.*

Two men walk their bicycles down a dusty road that leads into the central Mexican town of Xichú; for a moment they are silhouetted in the light filtering through the trees. The smallness of their figures, the twin church spires that are the only clue to the nearness of the town, the trees towering over the scene—all combine to make an unrepeatable, split-second record that testifies to the ever-changing nature of life on the road.

Xichú, San Luis Potosí, Mexico, 1971

Arthur Freed

Just before leaving on his trip, the photographer made this picture of himself. While waiting for a traffic light to change, he set the self-timer and held the camera at arm's length until the shutter tripped. To him, the result is a candid confrontation with the camera that reveals his inner feelings: expectant, vulnerable, a little sad.

Since his student days, Arthur Freed has been using personal experience as the subject of his work. Through this detailed examination of his own actions he has tried to document the universality of all experience—believing that what one man can see clearly, all men can learn from.

Freed has a deferential attitude toward his photographs: he trusts them far more than he does his memory. What he may remember as a moment of triumph his pictures may reveal as a time of vacillation and indecision. If so, Freed believes the pictures. Thus his work enables him to continually review his actions in order to gain insight, self-awareness and understanding.

Freed's preoccupation with photography started in high school in Buffalo, New York, when the piquant smell of the school photo lab drew him inside its

doors. At Rochester Institute of Technology he studied under the eminent photographer Minor White, who told his students that "all photographs are self-portraits," advice Freed never forgot. In time he became a teacher of photography and since 1963 has been on the faculty of Pratt Institute in Brooklyn.

The work on these pages is excerpted from a photographic diary he kept during an automobile trip from Denver to San Francisco in 1970. The pictures can be looked upon as a documentary series, a collection of candid and personal shots that reveal some of the complicated inter-relationships in the everyday life of a young couple. But each picture can also stand on its own as a record of a shared moment. Taken together or separately, the photographs unsparingly document the psychological states of two individuals.

In this unusual view of Leslie, the photographer shows her as a distant figure in a landscape, an ill-defined person resembling someone glimpsed in a dream. A deliberate sense of disorientation is created by the roof of the car, spreading before Leslie in a mysterious mass. The emptiness of the background isolates her, a human being in a mood of loneliness. The result is a picture exposing the strangeness and separateness that often disturbs two people who thought they knew each other well.

◄ *Happy in each other's company, Arthur and Leslie walk arm in arm under a bright and cheerful sun at Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado. His facility in taking pictures of himself even while engaged in a highly personal relationship gives an unusual quality to this picture: it is as if he stepped outside his body to document the mood of both subjects.*

Leslie, in a moment of reflection, gazes idly at a kitten from the comfort of a bed. The informal quality of her kicked-off shoes and the soft way the kitten seems to blend into the wooden floor connote the quiet and casual tone of the scene, a relaxed time of serenity and ease.

With a road map unfolded before them, the couple argue over which road to take. Although such an argument might be considered trivial, there are signs that feelings are running deep. Arthur, his eyebrow seen arched in the rearview mirror, is irritated if not angry. Leslie is visible only as a hand held up as if to ward off the flow of the mood.

This tense scene in a motel room is ripe with the sense of action just missed—either a quarrel has just occurred and tempers are cooling, or a battle is brewing. As Arthur takes the picture, he and Leslie eye each other warily in the mirror. At this taut moment their hostility is shared and so is an acute physical awareness of each other.

A mood of subtle but profound alienation is recorded in this photograph. Leslie sits disconsolately in the grass, her head lowered, a rigid hand the only evidence of her deep feeling. Freed has turned his back on her to face his camera—and the viewer—head on. Through such confrontations, Freed feels, the complexities of human nature and the experiences of one's lifetime can be sorted out and better understood.

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